

MAKING, MATURING, AND MULTIPLYING EVANGELISTICALLY
RESPONSIBLE DISCIPLE-MAKERS

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BY
RYAN JOHNSON

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ABSTRACT

This project is about New City Church's journey toward evangelistic faithfulness. My heart is to see the Church be equipped to make, mature, and multiply evangelistically responsible disciple-makers as this is Jesus' heart for *his* church. In this project I explore how the addition of missional accountability to existing discipling relationships and principle-based evangelism training can impact evangelistic faithfulness in a given community.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

The Problem

From the outset of planting New City Church (NCC) in early 2015 our launch team was extremely cautious to resist the urge to rush into starting a corporate worship service. Friends that had gone before us in planting informed us that it is absolutely crucial to set the correct DNA of our church before it launches the corporate worship service. With this mixture of caution and zeal in mind we started the church and have found ourselves joyfully heeding those words over the past four years. During the second year of the plant I became aware of something that troubled me—our body did not seem to be having the missional impact that I had envisioned in our community. This thesis-project is about NCC’s cultural pivot which was born out of a desire to take the leaders of our church that are in discipling groups as leaders and participants and encourage and equip them to steward the gospel well through their interaction with the not-yet-believing community around us.

The Setting and Context

My family and I received a call to church planting in metro Atlanta in 2012. Some of the best wisdom that I received from other church planters and pastors was that, if they could do it over again, they would spend more time mining out the culture of a given community before ‘pressing’ their own ministry model and agenda on top of the current culture. We had the opportunity to spend time learning about the culture of our

community as we had two and a half years of training living in our community before officially launching New City Church in early 2015.

We had some ideas of what we wanted to see in the DNA of the church when we landed in our community, but it took some time to figure out how to get to the place of implementing those ideas. The first measure that I began taking was to meet with anyone who would meet with me in Lawrenceville and ask them three questions over the course of our time together: Question one: “Do you follow Jesus?” Question two: “What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus?” Question three: “What does it mean to be a disciple-maker and how do you go about doing it?” Over the course of two years of doing this, I met with at least one hundred different people. The results were astonishing.

Regarding question one: “Do you follow Jesus?” I was overwhelmingly surprised that nearly every single person I met with claimed to follow Jesus. I tried to meet with diverse individuals who worked in different sectors, lived in different communities, and led different types of lives. In the way that I asked the question, it did not feel formal or forced, but I would just let it naturally flow. I intentionally avoided asking them, “Are you a Christian?” because I wanted to press into the heart of being a Christian—following Jesus.

Regarding question two: “What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus?” The responses to this question were not all too surprising. It frankly revealed the common perception of the deeply religious south. Most people responded with answers that indicated Christian activities such as church attendance, the name of their pastor, or indication of other religious deeds that they performed. What was lacking from most conversations was an indication of the transformative presence of the Holy Spirit

changing their lives. There were times when asking these questions that I wondered why I was even called to plant a new church in this area because of the evangelical haze that seemed so pervasive in nearly all corners of the culture. You typically think that the impetus for planting a church should be an indication of the lack of interest in spiritual things, but to my surprise, at first glance it seemed to be quite the opposite. However, the answers to my third question gave us the heart and approach that we carry on as a church to this day.

Regarding question three: “What does it mean to be a disciple-maker and how do you go about doing it?” The reason that I would ask this question the way that I did was because I wanted to get down to the tactical implementation of following Jesus. If this question had been answered differently, we likely would not have planted in Atlanta. However, this question rarely had any response at all. So, what I discovered is that the main imperative of the Christian life—disciple-making—was uncharted territory for most people in my community. The lack of understanding of how to make disciples began to be the seam that God gave us and the heartbeat of our call to our community. We would be about doing our best to fully form, shape, and equip disciples who know how to make disciples. The vision then began to be framed in a way that no matter what city you live in or what church you are a part of, you know what it means to be a disciple who makes disciple-makers.

The best way to describe what we discovered through these meetings and meals that we had over the course of two years was that there was a “formation failure” of disciple-making in our community. At first glance, we wondered why our city needed another church, but as we migrated into the foundation of those we encountered, we

began to realize that our city does not need another mass evangelistic worship gathering. There are many Sunday morning worship gatherings that do this very well and there is a place for that, but that is not what we are being called to do.

Programs, events, and classes cannot make disciples; only disciples can make disciples. If what our community needs more than anything else is to be discipled, we should start with that in mind. Discipleship at New City Church is about *making, maturing, and multiplying responsible disciple-makers*. In August of 2013, my wife Megan and I each started a discipleship group. I had six men in mine; she had six women in hers. The goal was to labor intensely in one another's lives until we reached the maturity of multiplying our leaders into the lives of others. This vision altered our approach to church planting. Most church planting endeavors begin with the larger worship gathering in mind. We decided to take a different approach as we did not want to launch a public worship service until we were confident that we could make disciples that were able and equipped to make disciples. Our metric for readiness in this area was to send out several new groups from our existing groups at the launch of the church. Tactically, what this meant for the launch of our church was that we had to delay the launch until we were ready to send out our developed leaders to lead groups of men and women.

The current effect of that delayed beginning of our launch, and its effect on the culture of our church today, cannot be over emphasized. From day one of the launch of our corporate worship gathering it became known that we wanted the Holy Spirit to do this deep work in our lives and community. Starting a church this way did not come without its own challenges. First, we had a slower numerical start to our church than

some other church plants in our community because we did not emphasize church as a “Sunday morning meeting” as much as other churches did.

Another challenge of planting a church that desired to be winsome with the lost in our community was that outreach and evangelism in our context was typically evidenced in two ways: mass evangelism in local churches on Sunday mornings and event-based mercy ministry to the poor. While both would be effective routes of evangelism, we felt like we needed to broaden this idea if we were going to be an effective community of disciple-makers.

An additional challenge that we faced was that we made a strategic decision that each discipleship group would meet during a weekday either before work or after work. Acts 5:42 describes the early church as meeting “everyday, in the temple and from house to house.” This idea of *oikos*, or an extended family gathering, is of being with one another in the intimate setting of the home. This ideology began to permeate our DNA because of the emphasis that emerged for us in the scriptures about gathering frequently together. In one sense, we *refused* to become *efficient Christians*. By making our groups gather during the weekdays it meant that everyone had to readjust their schedules and be intentionally sacrificial about following Jesus. We could not just put our ‘Christian game face’ on for the Sabbath, but we would be together during the week. In metro Atlanta, where the typical person is spending two hours per day in a car commuting to and from work, this was a huge paradigm shift. Heartache and disappointment came as some of our earliest acquaintances would not attain that measure; however, we were setting culture in those early days that still carries us today.

Current Efforts and Perceived Effectiveness

New City Church publicly launched our worship gathering on February 22, 2015. Before we launched, we had decided that to be effectively making disciple-making disciples in our community, we needed to have three predominant foci: The Worship Gathering, The Missional Community, and The Discipleship Group. Admittedly there are many things that a church is biblically called to be about and do, but we felt like these three types of environments and webs of relationships could foster biblical Christianity in our community.

The Worship Gathering

New City Church made a philosophy of ministry decision early on that our corporate worship gathering would be primarily aimed at “equipping the saints for the work of ministry” (Ephesians 4:12) all the while, being intelligible and invitational to anyone who would come.¹ We decided to aim for this end because we had all witnessed churches that tried to make the worship gathering all about evangelism, and the problem we saw in this was that mature believers would not stay engaged with the ministry for long because it could not feed their souls. On the other side of the pendulum is the church that tries to disciple its people predominantly through the worship gathering. In these types of churches, people often suffered from spiritual obesity as they had exorbitant amounts of Bible knowledge from all the expositional sermons that they had heard through the years. However, they were never forced to take action on the teaching at hand because one teacher was discipling the entire congregation and could not possibly maintain the one-on-one relationships necessary for accountability and growth.

1. All Scripture references are taken from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

For New City Church to achieve our goal, we wanted to have a different kind of worship gathering. Outreach and discipleship certainly happens in our worship gathering but the difference is we have never tried to make it the only place this happens. Newcomers to the church have picked up on this and shared with us statements like, “I started bringing my neighbor to church because I heard you talk about investing in and inviting your neighbors to church.” Or we frequently hear, “While I’ve historically feared reaching out to not-yet-believers, I hear stories on Sunday mornings of people coming to faith from other belief systems and I realize that I do not have to have all the answers, but just a willingness to be used by God.” Even in the language that we use to describe unbelievers, we say “not-yet-believers” because our prayer is that unbelieving people would become believing people through the power of the Spirit and the obedience of our people.

In our Worship Gathering, we predominantly preach through books of the Bible so that we can effectively equip our people with solid knowledge of the Word. However, we try to take the Word each week and magnify the impact it has on our hearts. As Presbyterians, we are so prone to let the Word only live in our heads and never reach our hearts and hands. We also seek to let the manifestation of the “Priesthood of all believers” be present throughout our worship gathering. We desire to use the gifts of God’s people in every way that we possibly can, thus not only focusing on a transfer of knowledge but also on a transformed lifestyle.

The Missional Community

Missional communities or (MC's) are the lifeblood of the church. We have known from the beginning that we must gather outside of Sunday mornings on God's mission for any church to be a church on mission. We have witnessed a lot of models of small groups that have served this purpose in the church to various degrees. The common complaint I have heard about traditional small group ministry is not that it is not good, but rather it is not enough. When we aim our small group structure solely at fellowship and Bible study, we get an inclusive Bible club. The question we have been asking is how we can engage the established church relationally and yet provide an environment in which new and not-yet-believers can connect. The answer that we have come up with at New City Church (NCC) is our missional communities (MC's). These groups have four foci: Prayer, Bible Study, Fellowship, and Mission.

MC's are the primary way our church at large gathers outside of Sunday morning. MC's provide a forum for participating in mercy ministry, social outings, and living life together throughout the week. Any outside ministry opportunities our church participates in are focused on our church working together to accomplish our mission. What do we mean when we say "mission" at NCC? Mission is the advancement of the gospel. For most Christians, mission means a trip to the jungles of Cambodia or the slums of Manila. Those trips can be considered mission, but we believe mission is so much more. We can be on mission speaking the truth to our believing brother in Christ who is stuck in a cycle of unbelief as we are seeking to advance the gospel in his heart. We can be on mission by bringing our newly believing neighbor into the fellowship of the local church for the first time. We can be on mission inviting our not-yet-believing co-worker to a cookout that our

MC is hosting, thus giving him or her the opportunity to belong before they believe.

Mission is about advancing the gospel.

Two of the other unique qualities that MC's provide us with are the opportunity to train and equip new leaders as well as the opportunity to engage newcomers. The model of our current MC's is constantly to have an apprentice leader that is learning and being equipped to multiply out of the group. We do this for a couple of reasons. First, it keeps us on mission. We believe part of being on mission is being a friend of change because things must change to accommodate new people into the life of our community. Second, it stabilizes the vision and culture of each of our MC's. Early in the process, we attempted to start an MC with people that thought they had the vision, only to find out that they did not. It is much more difficult to dissolve a group that is not on the same page philosophically than it is to take the time to train someone thoroughly. Our MC's serve a crucial purpose in our vision of living as the family of God together in Lawrenceville, proclaiming and demonstrating the gospel of grace to one another and our community. However, we have found that we cannot effectively and biblically live out the mission of our church without doing this. The mission of NCC is to make disciples of Jesus who live in community and on mission. In addition to our MC's, we wanted a deeper sense of community, and we knew that our discipleship groups would accomplish this through a focus on Jesus in our everyday life.

Discipleship Groups

In every New City Church discipleship group, we focus on making disciples that live in community and on mission. Disciples cannot be made apart from living in the

middle of this tension. How you go about making disciples may vary as long as you are sharing all of your life and helping to form people into the image of Jesus.

Typically, discipleship relationships flow out of missional communities. Within our New City Church discipleship group culture, we believe that Jesus not only gave us the message for discipleship but also the method for discipleship. The method of discipleship as evidenced by Jesus is for all of life; we never see Jesus compartmentalize the spiritual formation of his men into one category or another. It seems like everything that Jesus did, he did in view of the men he was discipling which worked the DNA of his mission more deeply into their hearts. For instance, in Matthew 16:13-20, Jesus takes his disciples with him to Caesarea Philippi, which would have been akin to one of the Pagan capitals of this region. Why would Jesus expose his men to this type of culture to disciple them? He did this to show them what the world was like that he would be sending them to, and it was there that Peter professed faith in Jesus as Messiah.

Following Jesus' example, we learn that because discipleship is relational in nature, it ebbs and flows in and out of different seasons. In discipleship there are in-depth seasons of equipping, as seen from Jesus as he was with his men very intentionally for about three years; but we notice that it is always for the purpose of maturity and multiplication. The seasons of training and equipping are aimed at the missional formation of the disciple. Matthew 11 and John 17 reveal that Jesus was constantly setting before them this vision that he was going to be going away and that they would be sent out just as he was. Jesus' method of discipleship was with the same gender. Now, while Jesus shared deep life with some women, he did not have women in his group of twelve. We take this to imply that it would be best to have groups of the same gender.

Jesus' method of discipleship was for learning and growth, for accountability and equipping, for prayer and empowered by the Truth. This is how Jesus disciplined his men. So, our question at New City Church began to be, what would it look like for us to use the principles of Jesus for making disciples?

As Dr. Robert Coleman points out in his work, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*,

Why did Jesus deliberately concentrate his life on so few people? Had he not come to save the world? ... Why then did he not capitalize on the opportunities to enlist the mighty army of believers to take the world by storm? ... The answer to this question focuses at once on the real purpose of his plan for evangelism. Jesus was not trying to impress the world, but to usher in a kingdom.²

Jesus seemed to be extremely focused in his selection of disciples with a very deliberate purpose in mind. Selection is a very important step in the process of a successful discipleship experience. We keep the F.A.I.T.H. [Faithful, Available, Interdependent, Teachable, Humble] acronym in mind when helping to put our groups together at NCC. New City Church staff desires to help our leaders with selection. This process is not always easy, but we are willing to get messy for the sake of helping to make disciples the way that Jesus did. What you notice from Jesus' ministry is that the call is difficult and not everyone is ready to follow Jesus.

At NCC we follow this process: As God places people on the discipler's heart and in their path, they should be in conversation with them and let the leadership of the church know. In the meantime, we suggest potential members for disciplers to meet with as well. It is important to have a meeting with the potential member of the group to lay out the plan for discipleship and to pray with them about it. The two of them will then pray about it separately and communicate with one another about where they feel the

2. Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 1972), 195, Kindle.

Spirit is leading them. NCC trusts the Spirit to lead us in this process.

While many see discipleship as a one-on-one endeavor, we endeavor to look to Jesus' model. For example, Jesus had a group, and we also have found that a group discipleship format is the best way to do this. The leader is the facilitator, but what we have seen begin to happen in our discipleship groups is that the members of the group are encouraged to spend time together with the people in it, and common interest and encouragement for the journey arises from this. We have found at NCC that because we are all awakened by the Spirit of God, we all have the power to disciple others to some degree. We all have a joint responsibility to help one another mature in the gospel even though there are various stages of maturity in the life of the believer.

Our discipleship groups require a higher degree of accountability and commitment than our previously mentioned MC's. The MC is a place for people that are new to the church to come and connect with others in a lower commitment setting. However, we ask the people in our discipleship groups to commit for a year at a time. We have found that it typically takes about three years for someone to feel equipped and be empowered to lead a group on his or her own. This means that once we set our discipleship groups for the year, we close them off and let them incubate. We have found from experience that when we fail to do this, we lose the intimate culture of disciple-making.

NCC helps our discipleship groups emphasize commitment by encouraging a covenant to be agreed upon by the group at the beginning of the year. We have found that without doing this, attendance and participation is spotty at best. We have decided to be forthcoming with our expectations and in some ways, we try to talk people out of

participating. If they can easily be talked out of participating in a group, they are most likely not going to stick it out. We see in John 1:37-39 that Jesus is not desperate for his first men to follow him. We do not see Jesus begging Peter and Andrew to follow Him. But rather, Jesus issues the invitation to “come and see” and they take initiative to readjust their lives to be with Jesus. We have found that if we must beg people to investigate and participate in the model of disciple-making set forth by Jesus, it is probably not the right season for them to participate with us. Again, the purpose in doing this is to be as effective as we can during the selection process (see Appendix A).

In our context, we have found that the best meeting rhythm is to meet every other week, although some groups meet weekly. The reason for this is because there is a fair amount of homework and study that go into each meeting. Along with the meeting schedule that the group chooses, we have found that getting away overnight with your group one to two times per year is also extremely beneficial. If group leaders need help planning and organizing their retreat, we help them with that.

Scripture memory is another important component of the discipleship groups that we expect. The scriptures say, “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11). We have found that scripture memory is not a discipline that most participate in without accountability. The importance of the issue of memorization is emphasized because the Bible links it to “not sinning against God” which is something that every Christian desires. In each of our groups, we aim to memorize 20 verses of scripture each year, typically one verse per meeting. This can be an entire passage or something such as the Topical Memory System produced by the

Navigators ministry.³

In addition to scripture memory work, we have two approaches, proactive and reactive, to the content of our meetings. The proactive content are things that every discipler of men or women needs to be passing on to their group. We have a curriculum library of approved resources that the leadership of our church has put forward. There are also a few all-in-one curriculums that we have used before, that can certainly be helpful and serve a purpose in our discipleship groups. However, what we focus on is that there are definite benchmarks (see Appendix B) that are discussed with the discipleship group on a regular basis within our theological framework, but we are not as concerned with the particular curriculum a group decides to use.

One reason we feel comfortable with flexibility in choosing content is because our church's sending pastor, Randy Pope, taught us to use specific priorities as we strive to disciple others. Randy Pope's T.E.A.M.S. acronym stands for truth, equipping, accountability, mission, and supplication.⁴ In our discipleship groups, we have found that keeping an emphasis on these priorities, along with our church's theological framework and focused benchmarks (see Appendix B), produces balanced disciples. When we emphasize some parts of our discipleship over others, we tend to become unbalanced. A common theme we see is an over-emphasis on the "truth" element, meaning bible study, without massaging those truths into our heart and hands through accountability and prayer. If left to their own devices, all of our groups would become Bible and prayer

3. The Navigators, *Topical Memory System*, Pap/Crds ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2014).

4. Randy Pope, Chip Ingram, and Kittie Murray, *Insourcing: Bringing Discipleship Back to the Local Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 78.

groups with a missional formation failure of no accountability or mission emphasis. The study of the Word should always lead to an application of the Word: “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22). The Bible study that only hears the Word and does not seek to put it into action is a deceived group of people according to this instruction.

Our discipleship groups are not only proactive in the content that we want to see our groups embrace but reactive as well. To be reactive in our leadership, we focus on the fact that forging disciples is about walking alongside one another by seeing life as the laboratory for our development. Disciples are not made in a vacuum. A part of what we are doing in discipleship groups at New City Church is helping one another see that all things are working for our good, for our development, for our progress in the gospel, and that we need to make space to talk and pray through that together (Romans 8:28-30). The other part of our reactive emphasis is to take an opportunity to look at cultural issues through the lens of the biblical gospel such as immigration, racial reconciliation, same sex marriage, and more. Our hope is that the scriptures and disciples of Jesus would form the worldviews of our people more than Fox News and CNN.

New City Church began with two discipleship groups and three MC’s four years ago and, as of 2019, NCC currently has 85% of its covenant partners and regular attenders participating in one of the 24 groups (MC’s and discipleship groups combined) that our church offers. The method of starting new groups (both MC’s and discipleship groups) at New City Church is that we forge new leaders within our groups and send them out to start new ones. It has been a tremendous encouragement to see the development of disciple-makers in our midst in such a short amount of time.

Weaknesses and Opportunities for Improvement

The leadership of New City Church is, from an overall perspective, pleased with our efforts in discipleship and evangelism, but we are not content to stay where we are. There are a few very specific areas that we would like to see specific, tangible growth over the next two years of our church.

Diversity

The first opportunity for improvement we see opening to us is our need and desire to actively pursue more diversity racially, culturally, and socioeconomically in our church. We are not just pursuing diversity in our worship gathering but in our leadership pipeline of discipleship. We are beginning to realize that this is going to take tremendous intentionality and changes within our approach to evangelism and discipleship. We have noticed that our church is accustomed to making disciples of certain types of people, mainly white, middle-class Christians. We are not completely disappointed with this result, but we are just not content to stay here. In order to fix this, we will need a paradigm shift in our current approach to encompass the culture of Lawrenceville.

Our church is planted in the heart of Gwinnett County, which is the second largest county in Georgia and by far the most diverse. The demographics of the students in the middle school that we meet in are widely diverse (see Appendix C): 9% Asian, 35% African American, 8% White, 45% Latino, and 3% multi-race. Our church is currently about 80% White. We fully understand that these things take time, but now is our time to engage this issue and begin a process where we never stop thinking through this.

Evangelistic Fervor

Lawrenceville is an interesting community not only because of its racial makeup but also because of its southern roots. We need a deeper and more accountable evangelistic approach in Lawrenceville. The community has been mass evangelized for nearly 100 years and it seems like the fruit to be born through mass evangelism may have run its proverbial course. We are open to how the Spirit wants to blow through this community and redeem sinners, but it seems like we need a more accountable, more relational, more communal approach to evangelism. As the pastor of a 200+ person church plant in Lawrenceville, my job is to be evangelistically faithful, but to also help “equip the Saints” (Ephesians 4:12) to be evangelistically faithful as well.

Mike, one of our members recounts the tension that we face in faithful evangelism in our city.

My most recent “evangelistic” (and ongoing) encounter is with my friend Eric. We met he and his wife, Chelsea last Christmas while cutting Christmas trees. After a couple of dinners together, Eric and I have become pretty close. He knows I'm a believer and I know he's an atheist.

A few weeks back, as a way to engage him with the Gospel, I asked Eric what his first thought was when he found out I was a.) a Christian; and b.) employed by an organization called Youth for Christ. His response started a two and half hour journey of he and I revealing our stories to each other, where I got to learn the framework of his beliefs and he, mine.

I believe the question was effective because I had (genuine) relational equity, shown a general interest in HIM (subsequently assuring him I didn't see him as a “project”), and let the Spirit lead. People get hung up vacillating between two ditches ... on one hand, they do want the “Spirit” to lead, but end up justifying their fear, by never actually confronting an unbeliever with the truth of the Gospel in worry of “offending”. On the other hand, they assume if they don't walk them through Romans road every time (bringing it back old school), they've failed as a Christian.

To summarize here is my approach for Eric and Chelsea. First and foremost, I'm praying for them and for opportunities to be a witness to them in both Word and

deed. We break bread together, I work on projects with Eric, and we take part in some of their interests and invite them into ours. Through prayer and “living life” together, we begin to see the pieces of Eric and Chelsea’s story where we can overlay God’s story. By doing this, we no longer feel the pressure to “get them saved”. We are not the Holy Spirit. Simply put, our only responsibility is to be faithful to what the Lord has called us to today (and that includes praying, serving, engaging, etc.). Saving is the Lord’s business, we’re just grateful to take part in it sometimes.

The two tensions of Spirit-led evangelism and fear-based results orientation are a real tension to manage, especially among churched southern Christians. One of the things NCC must do is to release our people to be led by the Spirit and winsomely confrontational with the Gospel when the Spirit opens the door, as opposed to shrinking back in fear. Here is a recent example from Jenna in our church.

I went on a coffee date with a friend last week and brought a book along to read while I waited for her. The book, *Jesus Feminist*, sat on the table as we talked and a woman sitting next to us asked if she could look at it. She was interested in it because “in her experience, most religions don’t respect women as equals.” She later mentioned something about seeing lizards in Africa. After my friend left I asked if I could sit with her and asked her about her experience in Africa. I learned that she is an anthropologist (now a professor) and has been all over the world in the peace corps and studying. When I told her I had been to Africa for mission work, she quickly began chastising me for evangelizing people groups who “already worship god.” She asked me why we feel the need to change their life, and potentially destroy their families/careers/communities even though all gods are basically the same. I responded that while I could definitely see how harmful it can be, we believe Jesus is the only true God, and I tried to explain why the cost of following Him is worth it.

She clearly disagreed and seemed very intelligent, so I didn’t try to debate or prove her wrong. Partly because I’ve learned that we rarely win people over by arguing, but mostly because I was intimidated by her and I don’t feel super confident in backing up the Gospel on the spot (so... I could definitely use some help with this! I know I should be able to defend my beliefs and have an answer ready). I stayed and talked with her for a while, not wanting to end on that note. We discussed people groups and how we can best serve their needs, how we should treat locals when we’re in third world countries. I think I earned her respect by showing that we *do* give thought to how we relate and do our best to do better than harm when traveling/doing missions. The best thing that seemed to ease her “sternness” towards me is when I admitted that I had probably made mistakes and would make

more mistakes in the future – she seemed to soften at that and was more willing to hear me out.

The conversation ended pleasantly, and she seemed grateful that I spent time with her – she is single and new to Georgia – and she told me she plans to buy and read *Jesus Feminist*. I pray that she finds some truth in the book! I walked away realizing how ill-equipped I felt in the moment, to answer theological questions and defend my faith. To be honest, I wanted out of the conversation as soon as I realized she wanted to challenge me. However, I am grateful for all of the times you’ve told our church how you relate to your non-believing neighbors – asking questions, admitting that you’re not perfect and have things to learn, seeking to build relationship without ‘preaching’ to them aggressively. I felt more confident in simply trying to show her love and interest without feeling the burden of ‘winning her over’ right then and there.

It is clear that both Mike and Jenna are growing in the gospel and growing in evangelism. However, what we notice is that the unbelief in both people that they encountered will most likely lead to very long “ramps” to conversion. The not-yet-believers in large part in our community have been so conditioned to the church that their hearts are very hard. Now, while this certainly is not the case with everyone we encounter, it is likely more than we will ever realize.

Take this last example shared by one of the officers in our church:

In college, I had a lot of training in discipleship and evangelism through Cru. During that time, I concentrated my time by ministering to campus leaders and led a Bible study with other leaders on campus. I felt this was the most strategic approach to take because they were people of influence. However, it was really based on sharing the four spiritual laws and it was not as relationship-oriented; one and done.

Once I graduated, I worked as a manager at Macy’s and this was the first time that I was immersed with virtually all non-Christians. I think I was known for more what I didn’t do, like drinking, than what I did do. While everyone knew I was a Christian, I’m not sure that I was the aroma of Christ. As a missionary in Morocco, I was able to disciple my neighbor for an extensive period of time and spent a lot of time using Scripture as the foundation, instead of the four spiritual laws. I began to see the scales drop from my Muslim neighbor’s eyes as he began to fall in love with Jesus. Once I left, I put him in contact with another missionary for follow-up, but I really don’t have any idea how he is doing spiritually now. When I worked at World Relief, I had three translators, all of whom were Muslim. One was from Bosnia, one from Somalia, and one from Iraq. I found this to be a fruitful ministry as I shared

life with them on a daily basis and openly talked about what Jesus was doing in my life. It is very easy to engage Muslims as religion is not a taboo subject.

I am now beginning to think more about the importance of *contextualization*. When I met Mohammad from Somalia last year, he was going through great difficulties. I realize that in Somalia, they have a high view of Allah and prayer. During most of my interactions with him, I prayed for him out loud in the name of Jesus. However, because of language barriers, I was not able to really unpack the gospel with him.

I also see that being in full-time Christian Ministry has many downsides. The foremost is that I have very little exposure to non-Christians. I've been taking the approach to be more intentional with praying for people and try to let people know that I go to church and tell more personal stories.

To be honest, I really don't have a passion for the lost. If I really believed where they would spend their eternity without Christ, I would be more compelled to intentionally seek out people. Also, being exposed to reformed theology for over 20 years now, I really see that it is only by God's Sovereign hand that people can come to know Christ and that only He can stir their hearts. Early on in my ministry, I believed that it was by my words or a formulaic book that people could change.

The three examples I have shared are just a few of many stories of the struggles and tension of evangelism in our context. My heart is first and foremost to encourage my people along in the journey. NCC is a beautiful and faithful church, and I want to help us finish the race and delight in Jesus.

Lastly, I would love to see NCC grow in the ability to apply the gospel to fellow believers. It is our belief that the gospel not only converts the not-yet-believer through the power of the Holy Spirit, but it also sanctifies the follower of Jesus. We need a both/and approach to evangelism. I think that NCC has this to some degree, but if we can continue to press the gospel into our spiritual formation, it will no doubt spill into our conversations with not-yet-believers.

Implementing Fresh Vision

While I am certain there are many things that we could do make progress in the areas of diversity and evangelism, I have indicated five next steps that NCC can pursue over the next year to help us see more evangelistic fervor and progress.

Preaching

One of the issues that has been revealed through some conversations with covenant partners (members) at NCC is the lack of a solid theological understanding of what happens in conversion. In 2018 we pursued a teaching series on the *Ordo Salutis*. However, the approach to this series was not simply a transfer of theological banter, but instead geared at equipping NCC to see and believe from the Bible what God's role is in conversion, what the not-yet-believer's role is, and what the Christian's role is. The roadblocks that our people are facing are in part a mindset that they must prove that they have been evangelistically faithful by *producing converts*. With this pressure surrounding their aim at the mission of advancing the gospel, it seems like each of them faces this tension of trading authentic friendship for rote presentation. In this series, we are going to explore how love for the lost and faithfulness to the Great Commission can live in *harmony*.

Training

Our people need ongoing training that will keep the vision, theology, and tools for reaching the lost at the forefront of their hearts and minds. After the first cohort residency, I wrote a curriculum entitled "Inside Out" which is a holistic evangelistic

approach that bears in mind the nuances of a postmodern culture coupled with Biblical faithfulness. I took a group of 25 people through this training in late 2016. I was discouraged at the conclusion of it, and frankly I am not sure why. In hindsight, I think it was great training but it seemed to lack follow-up and accountability. Perhaps I have used an incorrect measurement for gauging our congregation's effectiveness. I think I expected to see more conversions and baptisms, and in my mind that metric is the one that counts for optimal effectiveness. However, from the conversations that I am having with Covenant Partners at NCC, people are extending the gospel out in Word and deed. We are simply realizing that the condition of the community God has called us to is much more difficult ground to plow than we first imagined.

In the fall of 2018, when we offered this class again, our discipleship groups went through the training together so that they could implement the material into their ongoing group meetings for encouragement and accountability. Implementing the training through our current grid of discipling relationships, it is almost certain that we will see the intended results of our Covenant Partners beginning to take people from hearing the gospel, to seeing the gospel, to believing the gospel in greater measure than we ever have before.

Accountability

The only progress I have seen in evangelistic fervor among our people is to begin talking about it every time we gather in our discipleship groups. This past year I began beta testing this idea of evangelistic accountability with the six guys I am currently discipling. The first three weeks of this trial were fairly quiet and sometimes

embarrassing, thus revealing the lack of desire we had for evangelism. However, in my group, there began to be a tipping point that I believe was spurred on by the accountability.

The type of accountability that seemed to produce results was to dedicate 20 minutes of our 2-hour meeting each week simply to ask and report how our prayer life and relationships are being developed toward evangelism. “Am I concerned for lost souls?” “If so, how is that impacting my relationships and my prayer?” Little by little, each guy in the group seemed to be invested more and more into other guys’ lives as they were on mission together to the point that my discipleship guys would get together for meals with the not-yet-believers that other discipleship guys in the group were sharing the gospel with.

We plan to offer this evangelism training as our discipleship groups kick off in the fall of 2018. We will strongly encourage all of our discipleship groups to come to the training together so that they can massage these truths into the rhythm of their meetings each week. I believe that the more focused accountability will help each person engage more effectively in the Great Commission.

Church Health Assessment

In January of 2018, NCC administered a church health assessment which was completed by 30% of our members. We chose to use the tool produced by Leadership Transformations, entitled, “CHAT.”⁵ Our reasoning for using this tool was because of its holistic nature in assessing both the leader and congregant group separately. This

5. Leadership Transformations, Inc., *The CHAT Survey*, accessed March 11, 2019, <https://www.leadershiptransformations.org/assessments.htm>.

distinction became helpful as we sought to discover where breakdowns may be occurring beyond our leadership team into the congregant level. The assessment provided details about the overall perception of our church and its health. Our perceived strengths in the church revolved around our worship gathering, which the congregation and leadership team saw to be biblically robust and winsome. Another perceived strength was our focus on community and intentional fellowship. These strengths are worthy of celebration because this indicates that NCC has the type of DNA that could win and lead not-yet-believers to Christ as well as encourage each other up for good works.

We asked ten custom questions that were all geared at evangelism and our understanding of the gospel. I was hopeful to discover the breakdown of why we are not seeing more new converts of not-yet-believers. For instance, we asked, “When was the last time you recall sharing the gospel with someone?” Of the respondents, 47% indicated that it had been over a year. It is important that we discover the rationale behind this indication because, “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing from the Word of the Lord” (Romans 10:17). Our intention is to come alongside our congregants to increase this number. I suspect that we will find that the more you do something the more competent you become.

One glaring weakness we discovered is our lack of networking within the body of Christ in our community. This means that our congregation does not think that we partner well with other churches. While I am not sure that I totally agree with this assessment, this is the perception of our people. I think that this directly correlates with our lack of diversity currently in our congregation. Most churches in our community are ethnic

minority churches. If we can learn to partner and communicate our partnerships more effectively to our congregation, we may see an overall increase in health.

Curating Personal Evangelism Stories

It would be beneficial and encouraging to regularly curate the stories of the saints in their evangelistic encounters; meaning that we make it a regular practice to capture the life of the church on mission. As previously stated, I made it a practice over the last several months to gather the stories of evangelistic encounters from our Covenant Partners by simply asking them and this was remarkably encouraging to hear how NCC *is* living out the mission of God. Sharing these stories in our trainings will spur one another to faithfulness and encouragement. More than anything, our people probably need to be encouraged on the journey. Following Jesus is hard work and I, as the pastor, need to put more structure in place for the encouragement of the people of NCC on the path of following Jesus. Personal stories have a way of humanizing the mission and showing the beauty of us all being in the process of sanctification. Sharing stories would also serve to give one another examples of how to implement the mission into our own walks with God.

Conclusion and Thesis

In conclusion, while NCC was planted with the idea of trying our best to do evangelism and discipleship from the beginning, we are three and a half years in and we already see the changes and pivots that will be necessary for us to move forward effectively. While it can be overwhelming to think about making these changes, the

clarity that we now have for the path moving forward is an encouragement to our leadership. It is my hypothesis that if New City Church has our Discipleship Group leaders and participants participate in a six-hour, two session evangelism training course, followed by scheduled accountability discussion and prayer for evangelism for four months, then we will see increased gospel proclamation among the not-yet-believers in our community. My assumption is that if we have increased accountability centered around, but not limited to, evangelism among not-yet-believers, New City Church will be a more evangelistically responsible church and thus see an increased number of conversions in our community.

CHAPTER TWO

THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The mission of what Jesus came to do on Earth in his incarnation is adequately summed up in this verse: “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). Jesus came so that the world could experience the renewing presence of continuous revival in Him. Jesus describes those that are estranged from the reconciling love of God on this earth as “lost.” I believe that there is more than meets the eye with this verse. While it is true that “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23) and “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick” (Jeremiah 17:9), not all people that claim to believe in the Bible actually believe this to be true in their hearts. In other words, Jesus came to save lost people. Jesus did not seem to be drawn to people that did not truly believe that they were desperately lost and hopeless without him. He was drawn to those who truly needed to experience his reviving grace.

The term “revival” is an abused and nearly unredeemable word in western evangelicalism today. It has the presupposed undertones of drawn-out altar calls, staged emotionalism, and ultimately the works of man, not God. After researching the history of American revival, I believe that somewhere along the way between the First and Second Great Awakenings, the idea of revivalism became an adequate substitute for genuine revival. Revivalism is a cheap counterfeit to genuine revival. Revivalism is brought about by the work of man that seeks to produce the effects of the Spirit of God awakening

backslidden sinners to the warmth of God's grace while magnifying the sinful flesh of men. I'm convinced that revivalism was birthed out of a pure heart to produce something for God, but likely became sinful through the impatience of the revivalists themselves, as they had to wait upon the Lord. The distinction between revival and revivalism is of utmost importance because we can only define the current confusion of revivalism as opposed to genuine revival in looking at church history in North America. I am utterly convinced that revivalist tendencies have affected our current view of revival, evangelism, and discipleship.

What is genuine revival? In Walter Kaiser's *Revive Us Again*, he quotes Stephen Olford, who suggests that revival is "the sovereign act of God, in which He restores His own backsliding people to repentance, faith, and obedience."¹ C. E. Autrey adds another helpful description by saying, "Revival is a *reanimating* of those who already possess life."² With these helpful examples to guide me, I have sought to frame my own definition of revival as well, determining that revival is: "A wide-spread reanimation of the people of God, from God, brought about by treasuring the gospel of his Son; marked by a continuous cycle of faith, repentance, and new obedience." To be revived is to be brought back to the life something or someone previously had.

The effects of a soul that is experiencing the reviving presence of the Lord are expressed throughout the scriptures (2 Chronicles 7:14; Psalm 80:19; 85:6; Acts 3:19-21; James 4:8) and entail the benefit of a restored, refreshed, renewed, and rejoicing relationship with God. However, the preconditions for the revived soul are an awareness

1. Stephen Olford, *Heart-Cry for Revival: Expository Sermons on Revival* (Westwood, NJ: Revell, 1962), 33. Quoted in Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Revive us Again: Biblical Principles for Revival Today* (Scotland: Christian Focus, 2001), 7-8.

2. C.E. Autrey, *Revivals of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960), 13.

of sin that leads to a genuine repentance from sin.³ Revival that does not deal with an honest self-examination, self-awareness that leads to conviction, and deep repentance from sin is no revival at all.

The revived life is brought about through the continuous application of the gospel through word and deed (evangelism) and the formation of that revived life (discipleship) back into its original design by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:29). Christ is the better Adam. What was lost in Adam has been revived in Christ. When Jesus walked upon the earth, he announced the arrival of his Kingdom (Luke 17:21). The arrival of God's renewed Kingdom brought about through the redemptive work of Jesus has come to secure the revived presence of the Lord in the midst of believers, forever (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Matthew 28:20b; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

Our great dilemma today is that we live among a people who profess Christ, yet do not seem to possess Christ; who are in the church, but do not seem to be in Christ, and it leads me to believe that there is something deeply wrong in our understanding of what it means to experience renewal in Christ, to be formed into the image of Jesus, and to be sent on his mission of making disciples throughout all the world. If our own renewal with the Lord is unstable and seemingly insufficient in our hearts, how can we confidently and consistently announce the coming of the Kingdom of God and the renewing presence of the Lord in our ministries? This is the task of disciple-makers: to exegete the scriptures, to exegete our context, and to seek a way forward as the revived people of God.

3. Richard F. Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life: An Evangelical Theology of Renewal* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1979), 81.

Characteristics of Responsible Disciple-Makers

To understand the different approaches and responses to the invitation of following Jesus, we need to focus on several principles that apply to the call of Christ. The Parable of the Sower found in Matthew 13:1-9, Mark 4:3-9, and Luke 8:1-15 gives an overview of how the call to follow Christ comes to bear upon hearers of the Word.

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: “A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear.” (Matthew 13:1-9)

This parable brings two helpful themes into focus that are shared in every call and conversion to Christ: the message of the gospel that changes life as the seed sown and the condition of the human heart as the soil that seed is sown into. God is sovereign over those who receive and embrace the wooing call of Christ and those whose hearts are hardened toward that call. The temptation of Christians is to believe that the problem is with the gospel seed that is sown (Matthew 7:15-17); however, Jesus seems to be far more concerned with the condition of the soil (a parabolic comparison to the human heart) that the seed that is sown into in this passage. Drawing on principles and characteristics found in scripture of those who have responded favorably to the call of Christ allows us to understand more fully the good soil that the gospel grows in.

Jesus introduces the principle of what it actually means to follow him, and this continuum and tension are present throughout the scriptures. The continuum is “come and see” (Matthew 4:19; 9:1-28, 11:28; Mark 6:31-33; John 6:37) and “go and be”

(Matthew 28:1-20; John 8:11; Acts 1:8). We see this particularly in Matthew 4:19-20, where Jesus says, “Follow me, *and I will make* you fishers of men. Immediately they left their nets and followed him.” The worldly idea of discipleship is this idea of an apprenticeship in vocation. In most cases, the apprentice is far more interested in gaining experience and skills than the discipler or instructor is in teaching the skills. However in Jesus’ case, Jesus is the one responsible for making us his disciples. This does not negate the responsibility to follow Jesus, but it shows us as disciples where the power ultimately lies for us to be disciples, in Jesus’ power to “make” us his.

In this, we see that the “going and being—I will make you fishers of men” is predicated on the “coming and seeing—follow me.” The key to understanding discipleship in this verse of the initial following of Peter and Andrew is to understand Jesus’ role and the disciples (our role) in following him. The word for “make” here, ποιέω--*poieō*, is in the future tense, active voice, and indicative mood, meaning that being made a fisher of men is ultimately Jesus’ work (indicative mood) and it is not something that is happening all at once (future tense).⁴ The power for being made into a disciple of Jesus is something that depends upon his willingness and power, but our response as active participants in the process. Discipleship crosses us over the threshold of seeing discipleship as just an initial relationship in justification by faith through conversion to a relationship that is evidenced in sanctification by grace over time.

There are many characteristics that are derived from the gospels of those who responded favorably to the call of Christ to be discipled. In this section, many of these characteristics are explored (though not exhaustively) and common practices are noted.

4. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. Geoffrey William Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985), 552.

Faithfulness

Every man called by Jesus, to the degree that we have knowledge of from the scriptures, was a faithful man in his respective vocation and lifestyle. While we know fishermen (Matthew 4:18-20; Luke 5:1-11) and tax collectors (Mark 2:13-15; Luke 6:27-32) were called, we are not told of any other vocations the remaining disciples might have held. Although, the Council in Acts 4 noted that Peter and John were uneducated men, we must see that regardless of their education they were faithful men. This is evidenced in their vocational life prior to following Jesus, these men were *working faithfully* when called.

Availability

In each of the above scriptures, when Jesus called these men, they followed him. However, the case of Luke 9:57-62 shows three individuals that refused the call to follow Christ. In each of the examples, availability and priority were issues that hindered the type of response that Jesus expected from his disciples. Disciples of Jesus must have the margin and availability to follow him.

Zealousness

Men who accepted the call wanted to receive from Jesus, but they also wanted to be *with* Jesus. Initially they insisted on following Jesus wherever he was going (John 1:35-42).

Humility

Nicodemus in John 3:1-15 knew a lot about the law as a Pharisee, but still had a very teachable spirit. Nicodemus, although skittish and fearful, exemplified humility. It is for this reason that Nicodemus keeps appearing throughout John's gospel, such as the instance in John 7:50-51 in which he defends Jesus in front of the Pharisees and then again after Jesus' crucifixion in John 19:39-42, where Nicodemus prepares his slain Savior's body for burial. This leads us to believe with certainty that Nicodemus was indeed a disciple of Jesus.

Interdependency

When Jesus sent the seventy out to minister to the villages, he sent them out in pairs (Mark 6:7-12; Luke 10:1-23), and after Jesus ministered to the crowd and they became hungry, he did not immediately feed them. Instead of feeding the crowd himself initially, he instructed his disciples to give them something to eat (Matthew 14:16; Mark 6:37; Luke 9:13). Even Jesus modeled an interdependent lifestyle among his own disciples.

Vulnerability and Honesty

There were two persons in scripture that exemplified Jesus' value of honesty and vulnerability beautifully: The Samaritan woman at the well in John 4:1-45 and Jesus' call of Zacchaeus, the tax collector, in Luke 19:1-10. Both examples had become social outcasts. The Samaritan woman had been married five times and was sleeping with another man who was not her husband. Jesus called her out and she had to acknowledge this honestly. Zacchaeus, on the other hand, was a thief who had defrauded many by the

nature of his occupation and the expected character of those who took up the profession.

Upon Jesus' entrance into his house, Zacchaeus was convicted to give half of his goods to the poor and pay four times restitution to those he had stolen from.

Self-Awareness

An example of self-awareness and faith found in the New Testament is from the Roman Centurion's words to Jesus. He stated, "Lord do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof" (Luke 7:6). Jesus then proceeded to proclaim, "Not even in Israel have I found such faith" (Luke 7:9). Jesus valued the faith and self-awareness of rank and position that the Centurion obtained. He was self-aware of who he was considering Jesus' majesty. The Centurion mimics another example in the Old Testament when Isaiah was called: "Woe is me! For *I am lost*: for I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" (Isaiah 6:5).

Sacrifice

A disciple of Jesus was willing to lay aside his own desires and life to take up the call of Christ. It was impossible for a disciple of Jesus to feed the flesh and the Spirit simultaneously (Luke 9:23-27; Romans 8:1-17; Galatians 5:17).

Stewardship and Accountability

Lastly, the characteristic of responsible disciple-makers that ties the whole array of characteristics together is stewardship and accountability. Paul wrote the following to the church in Colossae:

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. (Colossians 1:24-29)

The Apostle Paul's highest aim, worthy of all his energy the Holy Spirit worked within him, was to make known the mystery of God. In fact, he considered it a *stewardship* issue. Typically, when we think about stewardship we think about money. However, the truth is that any gift that we receive must be stewarded to be found faithful in God's sight, especially the mystery of the gospel. To help us further define what it means to be an evangelistically responsible disciple-maker, consider the parable of the talents found in Matthew 25:14-30.

In this parable, Jesus tells the story of a master who is going away on a journey who entrusts three different servants with three different units of money that he calls "talents." One servant receives five talents, one servant receives two talents, and one servant receives one talent to steward. The two servants that had five and two talents immediately go out and put their talents to use, each doubling their money. However, the servant that has one talent buries it in the ground in fear that he might lose the master's money. After a long time away, the master returns to settle accounts with his servants.

The master proclaims, “Well done good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21;23) to the two servants who doubled their earnings, but to the servant who buried his money he takes it and gives it to the one who has ten and then he casts the unprofitable servant into outer-darkness, indicating Hell. This passage above all, is a passage about stewarding the gospel. This passage is about responsible evangelism. The longing of every follower of Jesus is to “enter our master’s joy” (Matthew 25:23) and hear the banner of faithfulness proclaimed over our lives.

Marks of a Disciple

After establishing the characteristics of those that followed Jesus in the gospels, we now turn our attention to the more specific marks of a disciple of Jesus. First, we note that Jesus’ disciples were all Jewish men who were very aware of the law and the prophets, although this awareness came in varying degrees. Jesus did not begin with a blank slate, but instead he brought the actual kingdom of God into focus rather than the assumed Kingdom of God.⁵ His teaching and way of discipleship were contextualized to be best suited for his hearers. In Luke 4:16-30, just before he called his first disciples, Jesus brought the very familiar prophecy of Isaiah 61 into focus. He did this at an in-depth heart level, assuring his hearers that although he did not appear to be the Messiah they were expecting, he was the Messiah that they needed. In fact, Jesus seemed to do this time and time again.

In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:17-48) each subject begins with the phrase, “You have heard it said...But I say to you...” In doing this, Jesus was declaring

5. Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992) 21.

what his Kingdom was and would be, and likewise, what it was not. In Matthew 13, Jesus gave several Kingdom parables to show the difference in the Kingdom that he was establishing from what they were expecting the Messiah to come and establish. Jesus was far more concerned with the posture of the heart than what these Jewish men had been accustomed to emphasizing. This is likely why Jesus spent so much time opposing those who only valued the external implications of God's law and, at one time, even called the Pharisees “whitewashed tombs” (Matthew 23:27-28). In summary, Jesus was taking the foundation in the Word of God that these Jewish men had been receiving and bringing it to a heart level (Jeremiah 31:31-33; Hebrews 10:16). Ultimately, he was revealing the Kingdom of God as it was coming to bear on the hearts of his hearers.

In addition to understanding his followers and sharing the Kingdom with them, there are other essential marks of discipleship that must be included if we are to follow Jesus’ plan for redeeming the World. Recent scholarship on the Johannine perspective of discipleship has come to general consensus concerning the essential marks of discipleship in John's gospel: abiding in Jesus’ words (John 8), loving one another (John 13), and bearing fruit (John 15).⁶

Three Marks of a Disciple from John's Gospel

The first mark of a disciple of Jesus is that the disciple abides in Jesus’ word. As Robertson observes, “Continuance in the word proves the sincerity or the insincerity of the profession, it is the acid test of life.”⁷ The scriptures say that “many believed in him”

6. Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 211-224.

7. Archibald T. Robertson, *The Fourth Gospel*, vol. 5, Word Pictures in the New Testament (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1932), 149.

(John 8:30). These “believers” were Jews that were following his teaching at a distance, only giving a very shallow form of belief in the teaching. Jesus began to put them to the test in John 8 by speaking of his Word to them. He then gave a conditional promise to them, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31). To abide is to remain; Wilkins reinforces this Johannine emphasis:

Therefore, Jesus is not here calling for a higher form of commitment from true believers in order for them to become disciples. A person does not abide in the Word in order to become a disciple. Rather, a person becomes a disciple through true belief, and the reality of that belief is proven through abiding or remaining in Jesus’ Word of truth.⁸

The second mark of a disciple of Jesus is contingent upon the first mark, abiding in Jesus’ word, which is to love one another. On their final night together in the upper room during the Passover meal, Jesus delivers a new command to his disciples. “A new command I give you: Love one another as I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:34-35). The evidence of discipleship is based on a conditional commitment to love one another, which can only happen through a true abiding belief in Jesus’ words. The love that these disciples were to show was the love that Jesus had shown to them. Therefore, the love that they exhibited toward one another was actually the residual effect of Jesus first loving them as they abided in his word (1 John 4). The early church father, Tertullian, notes in his context, “The heathen are wont to exclaim with wonder ‘See how these Christians love one another,’ for they hate one another; ‘and how they are ready to

8. Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 218.

die for one another,' for they are ready to kill one another.”⁹ There is undoubtedly a notable, tangible, and palpable recognition of the love of Jesus flowing forth from the disciples' lives, which leads us to our third mark of a disciple of Jesus, bearing fruit.

Jesus says this about the true disciple bearing fruit, “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples” (John 15:8). There is, once again, a conditional statement made by Jesus about genuine discipleship. Producing or bearing fruit is the precondition and evidence of being a genuine disciple of Jesus. The beauty of John 15:8 is that bearing fruit is a very passive activity for the branch. The effort that the branch exudes to bear fruit is simply to remain attached to the vine and to be available for the vine to “show” his fruit through you. This is a remarkable trait of discipleship.

Simply put, we should remain in Jesus, let Jesus manifest himself through you by your love to others in order that the world may see Jesus, and allow Jesus to produce his fruit in and through your life. Raymond Brown says it like this, “The sense is not that when the hearers bear fruit, they will become his disciples, but that in bearing fruit they show they are disciples. Becoming or being a disciple is the same as being or remaining in Jesus.”¹⁰ What Raymond Brown is saying is that the true work of a disciple is to remain in Jesus. Much of what discipleship has become today is nothing more than methodological training versus relational training. However, the Bible seems to teach that abiding in Jesus' Word produces love for one another, which ultimately produces the fruit of the Spirit working in and through those disciples who abide in his love.

9. B. F. Wescott, *The Gospel According to Saint John: The Authorized Version with Introduction and Notes* (London: John Murray Albemarle Street, 1892), 198.

10. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (II): Introduction, Translation, and Notes, AB*, second ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 662-663.

Characteristics of Those Who Denied the Call

My aim now is to turn our attention to those who seemed to have a desire to follow Jesus yet could not *remain* in Jesus for one reason or another. While I could belabor many examples, I will choose a few to elaborate on and extract the commonalities therein. George Whitefield, in his sermon, “The Almost Christian,” expounds Acts 26:28, in which King Agrippa asks Paul, “In a short time, would you persuade me to be a Christian?” Agrippa wanted the benefits of professing Christ as Savior without possessing Christ as Lord; and so it is with every example of almost Christians in the Gospel.

An *almost Christian*, if we consider him in respect to his duty to God, is one that wavers between Christ and the world. It is true that he has an inclination to religion, but he is very cautious that he does not go too far in it. He prays indeed that “God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven,” but all the same, he is very partial in his obedience. He is one that depends much on outward ordinances, and so looks upon himself as righteous. He is fond of the form, but never experiences the power of godliness in his heart.¹¹

To profess and not possess is to presume that the real nature of salvation is something that is merely built upon the foundation of man's inherent goodness. Almost Christians know how to look the part yet neglect the heart. Jesus understood this, and spent his entire ministry uprooting religious flattery and seeking disciples that knew the essence of his kingdom.

The Rich Young Ruler (Matthew 19:16-30) is among the saddest stories in all of the Bible. In this story, a rich young man approaches Jesus and asks, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Matthew 19:16) This man is an outwardly respectable man and wants some assurance for his lifestyle, and so he asks a simple

11. George Whitefield, *The Almost Christian*, accessed, March 11, 2019, <http://www.biblebb.com/files/whitefield/gw043.htm>.

question: What do I need to do? Jesus lets the young man know that he must be perfect (Matthew 19:21) if he is to attain eternal life. You see, this man believed that he could *do* something to attain assurance of salvation. However, Jesus takes the law, which this man knows well, and proves to the man with his command (Matthew 19:21) that he does not have the slightest clue about what real righteousness is and what Jesus' kingdom is.

In Jesus' reply to the man, in which he commands him to "go sell what you possess and give it to the poor, and then you will have treasure in heaven; and come follow me," Jesus uproots the unbelief in the man's heart. It may have been the thought of being impoverished that caused the man to walk away from the offer Jesus gave him with sadness, but I think it was much deeper than the possessions. The divided heart of this man really had to do with the essence and origin of righteousness. This young man could have gotten rid of his belongings and yet still have been working on his own self-salvation project. But Jesus does not only ask the young man to sell his possessions, but he asks him to sell his possessions and give the proceeds to the poor.

For the rich young man, the poor were the antithesis of his entire worldview structure. Remember his initial question, "What good deed must I do?" The poor are undeserving in this young man's mind because they can literally do nothing for themselves. Jesus has unearthed the young man's divided heart, and thus the young man walks away sorrowfully because he has accumulated many possessions for himself and yet finds himself poor in the only thing that matters, his relationship with God.

Let us now turn our attention to one last example of the source of all unfavorable responses to the call of discipleship.

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say

to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’” (Matthew 7:21-23)

While the Rich Young Man's story is among the saddest in the Bible, Matthew 7:21-23 is among the most terrifying scriptures in the Bible. This passage is about people who do the work of God in the name of God – who prophesy in his name, who cast out demons in his name, exercising his authority over spiritual powers, and who do mighty works in his name, healing people and proclaiming the Word powerfully – yet, do not *know* him. Jesus then will proclaim to those that profess Christ yet do not possess Christ, by calling them to depart from his presence because they are workers of lawlessness. The work that they have been doing is opposed to the work that he has come to do, because scripture tells us that he did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17). These workers are opposed to Jesus’ work, not because of their activity, but because of their identity. They are attempting to represent a King as his ambassador without knowing this King (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Almost Christians are those who try to keep the law without the law-keeper himself living within them. Thus, the three marks of the genuine believer from John prove to be true. Abiding in Jesus’ Word is the key to loving others and bearing fruit. If a disciple of Jesus remains in him, he always knows him, and thus will love his people and do his works with his motives. The duty of the disciple is clear; we must *abide* in Jesus. This is the true work of every disciple of Jesus. Our call is to focus more on remaining in the presence of Jesus all the days of our life and let the nourished branches fulfill their intended fruit-bearing purpose.

Problems with the American Discipleship Culture

The disciple-making movement that Jesus has passed down to his church through the centuries is the highest call that we have as his church. In this call, we find a centering mission that keeps us rooted in worship to our Father in heaven but also active in our participation with him in the restoration and renewal of all things through seeing all things reconciled to him (Colossians 1:19). After looking at responses of disciples within the pages of scripture in both a positive and negative sense, it is now time to turn our attention to the particular framework in which I have been called to live out this identity of disciple-maker. The context that I labor as pastor is in Metro-Atlanta, Georgia. As an outsider, and only living here for just under five years, I have identified several realities that make southern culture a difficult place to make disciples. The realities I have discovered can be summed up as three disciple-making deficiencies: 1) The Gospel we have preached; 2) The response we have settled for; and 3) The culture we have created.

Problem 1 – The Gospel We Have Preached

In our context, you will often here phrases like, “I wish they would just preach the gospel” in response to a pastor that champions social issues in our city such as racial reconciliation or mercy ministries to the urban poor. The context of these particular instances and responses are loaded with assumptions. What I am referring to is the reality that there is an underlying assumption that gospel word is opposed to gospel deed or that gospel proclamation supersedes gospel demonstration. However, if anyone were to take a quick look at Paul’s epistles and his defense of justification by faith alone in Romans (Romans 5:1-9) and Galatians (Galatians 2:9-16) and compare them to James’ (James

1:22-25) teaching on the imperative of gospel deeds, we can easily become conflicted about the possibility of a seemingly contradictory message in the Bible about the nature of the gospel and the requirement of man. Is it all God's work? Is man responsible to demonstrate the gospel as our redeemed nature cooperates with the work of the Spirit within us? I think the answer is a resounding “Yes” to both. However, in our context, I do not think this is the case. Tim Keller states:

So yes, there must be one gospel, yet there are clearly different forms in which that one gospel can be expressed. This is the Bible’s own way of speaking of the gospel, and *we should stick with it*. Paul is an example. After insisting there is only one gospel (Gal. 1:8), he then speaks of being entrusted with ‘the gospel of the uncircumcised’ as opposed to the ‘gospel of the circumcised’ (Gal. 2:7). When Paul spoke to Greeks, he confronted their culture’s idol of speculation and philosophy with the ‘foolishness’ of the cross, and then presented Christ’s salvation as true wisdom. When he spoke to Jews, he confronted their culture’s idol of power and accomplishment with the ‘weakness’ of the cross, and then presented the gospel as true power (1 Cor. 1:22-25).¹²

As the scriptures describe and Keller defends, there is only one gospel, but that gospel takes on many forms. The predominant storyline of southern evangelicalism is one *form* of the gospel taking precedent over all the others, which becomes a contextualization issue. For instance, if Paul were to preach the “gospel of the circumcised” to the uncircumcised there would be a tremendous disconnect, and while the Spirit can and will use that, it is not the most effective way to preach the gospel. The residual effects of pushing a predominant form of the gospel on a specific group of people results in a heart disconnect in the lives of those in that wake. I do, indeed, want to proceed cautiously from here, as in my experience there is undoubtedly a specific form of the gospel that has been pushed upon our city, and while it is sufficient in many ways, it is incomplete and thus is making incomplete disciples of Jesus.

12. Tim Keller, “The Gospel in All Its Forms,” *Christianity Today* 29 (Spring 2008): 15.

What is the predominant form of the gospel preached in Atlanta? It is what I like to call a two-part gospel. If every form of the gospel is a biblical gospel, it in some form or fashion identifies four acts or stages: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration. God created man in his image and perfect harmony existed between man and God where complete vulnerability and unity were experienced. In the Fall, Adam and Eve gave into temptation, disobeying God's Holy Word in the garden and thus were banished from his presence and severed from the relationship they previously enjoyed. But even though fellowship was broken, God made a promise ultimately to undo all the brokenness that had been done (Genesis 3:15). The promise was that a redeemer would come and bring redemption through his triumph over Satan and this Christ would satisfy the Father's wrath against sin and give us hope in his life. After the resurrection of our redeemer, God's people would then place faith in his substitutionary life, death, and resurrection finding hope and power to obey through Jesus' life. Christians are called to walk out the redemption they have in Jesus as they seek the restoration of all things (Colossians 1:18-19) until Christ Jesus returns to finish what he began. Meanwhile, his Spirit will carry us onto completion as we live in him (Philippians 1:6).

Problem 2 – The Response We Have Settled For

After a sermon I preached at New City Church in 2018, I had a man approach me to exclaim to me how I, in his opinion, did not preach the gospel in the sermon that day. I sat there with him over lunch later that week and discovered what his concern was. This man had a view of the gospel that was centered on a moment in a worship service where sinners were petitioned to repent of their sins and to come down to the altar to respond to

the gospel during the preaching of the Word. However, I did not have an altar call that week after the sermon. NCC is not opposed to them, but it was not an element in this particular sermon. However, during the Lord's Table that very same Sunday, I fenced it in such a way that I warned not-yet-believers of the danger of their condition and cautioned them not to receive it but instead to receive Jesus through faith. In our worship services we may not always have an altar call after the sermon, but the gospel is always in the service. I became aware of something that I have begun seeing in multiple ministry contexts around my community that is similar to this and the best way I know to describe it is a "truncated gospel."

A truncated gospel is a view of the gospel that is only half of the biblical theology expression of the gospel. Biblical theology describes the gospel as Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration. This starts with the goodness of God and the sinlessness of man in the garden and ends with the restoration of man through grace through the gospel. The truncated gospel, however reduces the gospel message down to only Fall and Redemption.

I believe that there are numerous reasons that have led to this reality in our culture, but among the top must be this idea of a salvation that is strictly *personal*. You will hear phrases among evangelicals in my context framed in sentiments like, "Have you received Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior?" This "personal Lord and Savior" form of the gospel was birthed during the revivals that came after the Second Great Awakening.

The phrase personal Savior is yet another recent innovation that grew out of the ethos of nineteenth-century American revivalism. It originated in the mid-1800s to be exact. But it grew to popular parlance by Charles Fuller (1887–1968). Fuller literally used the phrase thousands of times in his incredibly popular Old Fashioned Revival Hour radio program that aired from 1937 to 1968. His program reached

from North America to every spot on the globe. At the time of his death, it was heard on more than 650 radio stations around the world.¹³

The phrase “Personal Lord and Savior” was a very necessary form of the gospel given the context that it originated in. It became an effective means of getting spiritual seekers to commit their intentions to the Lord in context of a large group gathering. The negative implications of this form of the gospel is that it lacked the broader implications of salvation, namely the discipleship and missional emphasis. For instance, in *The Four Spiritual Laws*, notice the emphasis on individual salvation at the expense of God’s broader plan of salvation and redemption for the world. The Four Spiritual Laws are as follows:

1-God Loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. 2-Man is sinful and separated from God. Therefore, he cannot know and experience God's love and plan for his life. 3-Jesus Christ is God’s only provision for man’s sin. Through Him you can know and experience God’s love and plan for your life. 4-We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; then we can know and experience God’s love and plan for our lives.¹⁴

The Four Spiritual Laws do a great work in helping an individual to diagnose the condition of individual sin and the way to individual salvation, yet our issue with sin and the road to redemption is much deeper than the western individualized mindset we tend to see sin and redemption through. The Four Spiritual Laws are often coupled with the Bridge Diagram (see Appendix D) to help an individual grasp the gravity of individual separation from God through sin.¹⁵ Amy Sherman argues that the gospel presented in the

13. Frank Viola and George Barna, *Pagan Christianity?: Exploring the Roots of Our Church Practices*, revised and updated ed. (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Momentum, 2012), 191.

14. Bill Bright, *Have You Heard of the Four Spiritual Laws?* (Peachtree City, GA: Campus Crusade, 2007), 2.

15. “The Bridge to Life,” Navigators, accessed March 11, 2019, <https://www.navigators.org/resource/the-bridge-to-life/>.

Bridge illustration *lacks* the discipleship component.¹⁶ In *Kingdom Calling*, she juxtaposes the Bridge illustration with James Choung's four circles (See Appendix E).¹⁷ In the illustration of the four circles, Choung illustrates the brokenness within humanity and God in the context of the grand meta-narrative of redemptive history in the world. This is a helpful distinction to all because the gospel of the kingdom, regardless of its form, is about restoring what has been lost in sin. Discipleship, in other words, has suffered because we have taught, preached, and practiced a very myopic individualistic gospel that has not kept humanity's relationship with others and creation in view, in turn lacking to show our responsibility in their redemption. It proclaims a two-part gospel, that man has fallen and needs redemption. However, when we add the first and fourth parts of the biblical gospel, Creation and Restoration, we can clearly see the goodness of God's creation initially and the reconciliation he is bringing about through his people in the context of discipleship in view; coming to faith in Jesus has always been about discipleship. Creation becomes the model we look back upon and restoration becomes the aim of redemption – to see all things redeemed, restored, and renewed the way they were always intended to be; this is the Kingdom in our midst.

Problem 3 – The Culture We Have Created

The gospel that we preach cultivates the expectations for what a favorable response to the gospel is and is not. If salvation is about getting people to respond in faith by raising a hand and praying a prayer, we can find the most effective way to accomplish

16. Amy Sherman, *Kingdom Calling: Vocational Stewardship for the Common Good* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 81.

17. Sherman, *Kingdom Calling*, 79-81.

this. I would argue that this has been the approach of many in the last 100 years or so. However, if the Christian life is more than this, if it is truly about not only making individual converts, but also about making disciples who live in relationship to God, others, and the world differently, we then need to discover how we can most effectively accomplish this.

I have discovered through my time in Atlanta that generally three out of every four of the people that I have spoken with in Gwinnett County who self-select themselves as evangelicals do not have a biblical framework for Christian discipleship as stated previously. This leads me to believe that, at least in some cases, the form of the gospel presented to those interviewed has not yet brought about the intended result of a pathway of seeing discipleship as a lifestyle. In many ways, my city has lowered the bar of discipleship to a handful of events to participate in, in place of a lifestyle response that Jesus describes and commands in the gospels. We must preach a bigger gospel that shows Christian Discipleship for all that it is, a daily apprenticeship with Jesus in all of life.¹⁸ Discipleship is not something that we can choose to put on or take off. We are not finished as disciples until Jesus himself returns to perfect the unperfected and to finally and fully restore us and creation to his image.

In summary, we must raise the bar to the biblical standard of discipleship. Jesus says in the gospels that disciples are known by the fruit that they bear (Matthew 7:16) and that fruit is produced through our abiding apprenticeship with Jesus. Let us give our churches a grander vision for all that God wants to accomplish in reconciling all things to himself through the blood of his Son's cross. Discipleship would be an impossible vision

18. Zack Eswine, *The Imperfect Pastor: Discovering Joy in our Limitations through a Daily Apprenticeship with Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 18-20.

without the long-standing supernatural work of the Holy Spirit conforming believers into the image of God's beloved Son Jesus. Eugene Peterson describes discipleship as "a long obedience in the same direction."¹⁹ Biblical Discipleship is not diluted by the threats of a microwave-ready fast-food culture; it does not bow its knee to the demands of instant and immediate gratification, but instead is content to move at the pace of the authentic change the Holy Spirit brings about, understanding that all worthwhile endeavors take time.

Richard Lovelace, in his prophetic work on renewal, describes two concepts known as enculturation and disenculturation. In enculturation, there are elements of our culture that have become a part of our lives unbeknownst to us. On the other hand, disenculturation is the process of displacing the elements of a culture that have enculturated us. It is worthwhile for us to delve deeper into a concept of enculturation that Lovelace calls "Destructive Enculturation," so that we can further diagnose the cultural Christianity that has created the sort of *evangelical haze* that we experience here in the south. Destructive Enculturation, is:

A Saturation with godless culture of the surrounding world....When men's hearts are not full of God, they become full of the world like a sponge full of clear water that has been squeezed empty and thrown into a mud puddle. Only the fullness of Christ's life and the transformation of our minds by the renewing action of the Holy Spirit illuminating the whole counsel of God can effectively prevent this conformity to the world.²⁰

In southern culture, we have attempted to take the benefits of the gospel which include, but are not limited to: visibly moral living, active church participation, and cordial fellowship, to prop ourselves up as a model for Christian living for the world to see. However, because we have lacked the deeper work of confession and repentance,

19. Eugene Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2000).

20. Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Renewal*, 184.

which exposes our falsified lives and replenishes us with clean hearts and hands (Psalm 24:4) leaving us humbled and in awe of grace, we have absorbed the world like a sponge absorbs muddy water, because our hearts and lives have been desperately empty from the living water of Christ (John 4:14). The difference in the worldliness of Atlanta and the worldliness of other cultures is that our worldliness appears more presentable, which is honestly the worse type of worldliness.

I am reminded about this type of gradual enculturation that my community has become accustomed to as I recall C. S. Lewis' work, *The Screwtape Letters*. In this fictional and imaginative masterpiece, Screwtape, a senior demon, is training his novice nephew, Wormwood. He advises Wormwood with a letter that states the following:

You will say that these are very small sins; and doubtless, like all young tempters, you are anxious to be able to report spectacular wickedness. But do remember, the only thing that matters is the extent to which you separate the man from the Enemy. It does not matter how small the sins are provided that their cumulative effect is to edge the man away from the Light and out into the Nothing. Murder is no better than cards if cards can do the trick. Indeed the safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.²¹

In this story, we are reminded that the slow drift away from the crucial responsibility of discipleship into gospel-less morality is the worst kind of shift. The reason is that this type of gradual shifting takes us away at such a slow pace that we can hardly recognize the distance that we are away from the actual mission Jesus gave us of disciple-making. Now that we've explored the context and issues related to disciple-making in Atlanta, I would like to address how New City Church hopes to influence our city.

21. C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: Harper Collins: 2001), 49.

My Context and Shaping Examples

I am often asked the question, “How old is the church that you pastor?” To be honest, I am never sure how to answer that question. What most people want to know when they ask that question is, “When did you start having worship services?” New City Church began its weekly public worship gatherings on February 22, 2015. So, in one sense, New City Church is four years old. However, in my mind, as the church planter, I cannot extrapolate the hard work and labor of discipleship that went into the formation of this church, dating back to 28 months before we launched the first worship gathering, from the public evidence of that work manifesting itself in a public worship gathering. From the day my wife Megan and I were called to Atlanta, we knew we wanted to plant a church that took the mandate and call to make disciples as seriously as we possibly could. For us, that meant that we needed to get the culture set by starting with a few people and getting them trained up to make disciples before we publicly launched the church. One thing we have learned by doing this is that there is no quick and efficient way to make genuine disciples. If Jesus modeled a two to three year trajectory that he spent training his men, how could we expect to do it any quicker than he?

Models of Discipleship

There are many models of discipleship that have helped to shape and inform our call to plant a church that makes disciples here in Atlanta. Historically, these individuals or institutions have positively and negatively impacted my life and ministry.

Positively speaking, Cyril of Jerusalem (313-386AD) had a vision for discipleship that was thorough and he desired to see a unified process of covenant children growing

up into the gospel ways of their parents. Cyril's lectures, entitled the "Catechetical Lectures," testified to the importance of this process of catechesis for new believers. Cyril states, "Let me compare the catechizing to a building. Unless we methodically bind and joint the whole structure together, we shall have leaks and dry rot, and all our previous exertions will be wasted."²² For Cyril of Jerusalem, new disciples had to be thoroughly equipped to follow Jesus; discipleship involved the whole family coming to maturity. In this desire, he set a precedent for the Church at large to expect and strive toward maturity in Christ.

Puritan pastor and author Richard Baxter would visit his parishioners often personally, even though he had thousands of people in his parish. Baxter lived with a conviction that the father and husband was the spiritual head of the household. In his work *The Reformed Pastor*, he said, "Persuade the master of every family to cause his children and servants to repeat the Catechism to him, every Sabbath evening, and to give him some account of what they have heard at church during the day."²³ Baxter deeply desired to see his parish move toward maturity, and discipleship within the home is where it began. He relentlessly held his parishioners accountable by making visits to them to encourage their efforts and equip them to shepherd their own families.

Jonathan Edwards, along with Puritan writers from before his time, placed a high value on the preaching of the Bible as formative in discipleship. While I could list a multitude of things Edwards gave to the Church throughout his life and ministry, there are two distinct marks that I want to mention that have helped to shape discipleship in our

22. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments: The Procatechesis and the Five Mystagogical Catecheses* (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986), 11.

23. Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2012), 101.

church today. First, Edwards desired that people would know the real condition of their soul's depravity. When discussing the implications of the new converts he came into contact with in The Great Awakening revival, he said, "They now feel the pain of their own wound; they have a watchful eye upon their hearts, they did not use to have. They take more notice of what sin is there, which is now more burdensome to them; they strive more against it and feel more of its strength."²⁴ To Edwards, the acknowledgment of the presence and power of sin was key to understanding the breadth and depth of salvation in Christ. A focus on becoming more aware of sin and its tendencies is a key component of Christian growth and discipleship.

The second tremendous mark that Edwards left on evangelical discipleship was the way he described the Holy Spirit ordinarily manifesting himself in the lives of the regenerate. Edwards once said in a sermon, "The Spirit operates in such a manner as to cause in men a greater regard for the Holy Scriptures, and establishes them more in their truth and divinity, is certainly the Spirit of God."²⁵ In this sermon, Edwards is expounding 1 John 4:1 and he draws to our attention that the underlying work of the Spirit is to give humanity a regard for the things of God that they had previously been dull to. This leads us to understand the utter importance of the Spirit of God first grabbing our hearts in order for the true conformity to the image of Christ to have an effect on us. This understanding of the miraculous subtle work of the Spirit making God's Word appealing is a sigh of relief to the pastors that seek a real sense of the reviving work of the Spirit in our midst without all the emotionalism and manipulation.

24. Jonathan Edwards, *On Revival* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2014), 50.

25. Jonathan Edwards, *Works II* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 266-269.

It seems to me that through my experience, there are two ways to learn by example: one is by imitating what is worthy in others' example and the other is by choosing not to imitate what we witness in others. The following two short instances that I have chosen to bring attention to are in that light. I want to stress the point that by criticizing an institution and this man, I am by no means implying that either have not had positive impact on my life and the church at large, because each have.

The first example refers to the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and its view of the sacraments. The RCC has taken the good sacraments of the church that Jesus instituted, which are Baptism and Communion, and expanded them into seven sacraments, something that we frankly do not see in the scriptures. For the sake of space, I will not discuss the content of each of the seven sacraments. However, I do want to speak of the effect and implications of sacramentalism in the RCC. To put it bluntly, sacramentalism in the RCC gives a false sense of assurance to the congregants through works-based righteousness. Sacramentalism suggests that if you participate in these sacraments, then you will be justified and acceptable in God's sight, whereas the scriptures paint another picture. This view of discipleship has institutionalized the mission of Jesus by placing the RCC in sovereign control instead of the Spirit of God for the maturity of the Church. However, good works are of crucial importance in the scripture and we have been "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). In conclusion, the works-based righteousness that is championed by the RCC gives false assurance of salvation by placing someone other than Jesus as Head over the Church (Colossians 1:18).

The second example is Charles Grandison Finney. Finney was an attorney until 1821 when he left his law office in pursuit of vocational ministry. In 1835, Finney published a book entitled *Lectures on Revival*.²⁶ In this work, Finney employs what he calls, “new measures.” The new measures were creative, in that he abandoned the regulative principle of worship which says that the scriptures inform how we ought to worship, and the things that the scriptures do not teach we do not perform, but instead began to seek the appearance of new conversions at all costs. This pursuit resulted in the manipulation of thousands of individuals to make professions of faith in Christ. While only God knows the legitimacy of these professions of faith, I still think we are experiencing the negative effects of “product oriented evangelism” today. The worst of these “new measures” employed by Finney was what he called “The Anxious Seat.”

Below is Finney’s description:

By this I mean the appointment of some particular seat in the place of meeting, where the anxious may come and be addressed particularly, and be made subjects of prayer, and sometimes be conversed with individually. Of late this measure has met with more opposition than any of the others. What is the great objection? I cannot see it. The design of the anxious seat is undoubtedly philosophical, and according to the laws of mind. It has two bearings: 1. When a person is seriously troubled in mind, everybody knows that there is a powerful tendency to conceal it.... 2. Another bearing of the anxious seat is to detect deception and delusion, and thus prevent false hopes.²⁷

By taking a quick glance at his writings, one can quickly see the danger in his pragmatism-at-all-costs approach to evangelism. The backlash of this approach was that Finney left a wake of people behind him who had either no assurance of salvation or a

26. Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revival* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, 1960), 12-17.

27. Finney, *Lectures on Revival*, 259.

false assurance of salvation, leaving someone else to clean up the mess he made through his heretical practices.

All of these pastors, authors, and institutions have had an effect on the way I think about renewal, evangelism, and discipleship. However, in the planting of New City Church in Lawrenceville, GA, the biggest influence on the model of how we began the church is from Randy Pope, the pastor of Perimeter Church in Johns Creek, GA. Pope has presented to me a very minimalistic, laser-like focus on discipleship. As I have stated in this paper, there is much confusion as to the nature of discipleship. The first order of business for us here in Atlanta has been to clearly define, articulate, and practice what it looks like to be and make responsible disciple-makers in the context of community. In light of this, we took over two years to get our game plan together.

My wife Megan and I initially took a year to sit under someone worthy of modeling in discipleship. This was a huge step for us because it enabled us to step away from the practice of leading that we had been accustomed to for six years and re-learn and re-evaluate what we thought God was calling us to. After that first year of God speaking into and shaping our hearts for the mission as we sat under the leadership of Perimeter Church, we were ready to select our first disciples.²⁸ We each spent a period of about four months sharing life with people who seemed to be people of peace (Luke 10:6), and toward the end of those four months offered them the invitation to come and share life with us in a close seven-person discipleship group for the next year. In this group, we examined the necessary components that disciple-makers needed to be equipped with and pressed the gospel deep into one another's hearts through seeking truth, equipping, accountability, mission, and prayer.

28. Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 1972), 27-40.

This is how we started New City Church. NCC is now in its sixth year of discipleship. We currently have multiplied out eighteen leaders who have eighteen groups of people, ranging from five to seven people total in each group. As Pope told me in 2013, “If you focus on church growth, you will never see church health. But if you focus on church health, you will see church growth follow it.”²⁹ We want to continue to see the foundation of discipleship flourish at NCC in the coming years.

29. Randy Pope, text message to author, February 2, 2016.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The discipleship groups that have been birthed and are now multiplying at NCC are a framework that has proven to be fruitful for the dissemination of theology and cultivation of spiritual growth. In my quest to make these discipleship groups more evangelistically responsible, I have discovered many helpful adjustments that need to be made through our discipling communities for greater missional impact. Discovering issues that might be affecting our pursuit of evangelism is key to living out the mission God has called us to. There are three predominant areas we are seeking for our groups to address: role clarity in evangelism, message clarity of the gospel, and the approach to evangelism.

The Recovery of Role Clarity in Evangelism

Role clarity is perhaps the most important foundational component to an effective life on mission. Many Christians begin thinking more about how to approach others than what scriptures teach about our role in evangelism. If we are uncertain as to what our role is in evangelism, we will almost certainly not be content with how well we are living on God's mission. The passage of scripture that is helpful in reminding us of roles in the scriptures comes from 2 Corinthians 4.

In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light

shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:4–6)

In this passage, the Apostle Paul teaches that everyone is born spiritually blind and that no one has the power to make a blind man see, except for God. This means that we can expect lost people to live like lost people. We can be honest about the fact that we do not have the power within us to change anyone. Instead, our job is to proclaim the good news about the one who has the power to make the blind have sight. Rico Tice, who is the staff evangelist at All Souls Church, Langham Place in London, has written extensively on this in his work, *Honest Evangelism*.

In 2 Corinthians 4 Paul is saying that if you are a Christian, God took the same power that made the world, and He used it to give us sight: to give us hearts that understand that in knowing Jesus, we know God in all His majesty, perfection and love. That’s what happened when you became a Christian.... Now, if He can do it for you, He can do it for your friend or family member or work colleague.¹

Tice agrees that we as Christians tend to place pressure upon ourselves to accomplish things only God can do. The way in which we can consistently remember God’s role in evangelism is to think about our own conversion stories. God raised us from the dead, and there is nothing ordinary about someone’s life being raised from the dead. Every single time someone comes to faith, we have indeed witnessed a miracle.

J. I. Packer says it like this:

Paul’s confidence should be our confidence too. We may not trust our methods of personal dealing or running evangelistic services, however excellent we may think them. There is no magic in methods, not even in theologically impeccable methods. When we evangelize, our trust must be in God who raises the dead. He is the Almighty who turns people’s hearts, and He will give conversions in his own time. Meanwhile, our part is to be faithful in making the gospel known, sure that such

1. Rico Tice with Carl Laferton, *Honest Evangelism: How to talk about Jesus even when it’s tough* (Purcellville, VA: The Good Book Company, 2015), 54-55.

labor will never be in vain. This is how the truth of sovereignty of God's grace bears on evangelism.²

Romans 10:17 reiterates the truth that Packer articulates, stating, "So, faith comes from hearing, and hearing from the word of Christ." It seems that the proper understanding of roles in evangelism is that God is pleased to make his appeal through our lives (2 Corinthians 5:20) and grant faith through the hearing of God's Word being proclaimed. When faith is applied to the recipient of God's Word, God uses the same power that he used to speak light into darkness, to make the work of Jesus in the gospel good news in our hearts. Understanding and clarifying these roles from a biblical basis then allows Christians to feel the release of attempting to play roles that we simply do not have the power to play, i.e. causing someone to receive spiritual sight.

I have found that when Christians feel the release of this pressure of playing roles that they do not have the power nor authority to play, they are much more likely to live from a place of joy and deep rest on God's mission of making the gospel known through the world, leaving the intended results up to God—all the while still contending for lost souls. This, in turn, likely leads to a more honest culture surrounding the topic of evangelism; a culture where Christians do not feel the need to manipulate not-yet-believers into some type of decisions and where not-yet-believers could be honest about their response to the claim of the gospel and its effect on their lives. Many of the antics that surround evangelism (i.e. Charles Finney's "Anxious Seat" and the modern-day altar

2. J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, Americanized ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2012), 115.

call) in the church today have been produced by people who have forgotten what God does and what Christians do in Evangelism.³

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones' work, *Spiritual Depression*, discusses this phenomenon through the lens of an instance where Jesus heals a blind man in an extremely unique fashion.

And they came to Bethsaida.... And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, "Do you see anything?" And he looked up and said, "I see people, but they look like trees, walking." Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. And he sent him to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village." (Mark 8:22–26)

Jones indicates that this passage describes many people who would call themselves Christians around the world today. They claim to know Jesus and the power of his resurrection yet they have so little of his power alive in their lives. He refers to this condition as spiritual depression.

But it is not always the fault of the evangelist; it is quite frequently, perhaps as frequently, the fault of the people themselves, and here are some of the main reasons why they are in this state. First, these people generally object to clear-cut definitions; they dislike clarity and certainty. We need not at this point go into the specific reason for this. I think they object to clarity of thought and definition because of its demands. The most comfortable type of religion is always a vague religion, nebulous and uncertain, cluttered up with forms and ritual. I am not surprised that Roman Catholicism attracts certain people. The more vague and indefinite your religion, the more comfortable it is. There is nothing so uncomfortable as clear-cut Biblical truths that demand decisions. These people therefore say: 'You are being too precise, you are being too legalistic. No, no, I do not like this. I believe in Christianity, but you are being too rigid and too narrow in your conceptions'. You are familiar with that type. But if you start with the theory that Christianity is not clear-cut, do not be surprised if you find yourself, like this man, seeing 'men as trees, walking'. If you start your Christian life and experience

3. On "Anxious Seat," see Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revival* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, 1960), 259.

by saying that you do not want an exact focus or a precise definition in your picture, you probably will not have it!⁴

When we as evangelists are clear in the roles and conditions of those that are Christians and those that are not-yet-Christians, we enable an honest dialogue about what Jesus has come to do in the hearts of those that do not yet know Jesus and the clarity is life-giving to all involved. When the role of God and man is clear in the mind of the evangelist—the Christian seeking to proclaim the gospel—then everyone involved is freer to leave the results up to God, not us.

The Recovery of Message Clarity in Evangelism

In addition to role clarity, a similar danger occurs in message clarity for the Christian approaching evangelism. The danger in role clarity is that when there is ambiguity in who is responsible for what, it tends to paralyze Christians from being faithful witnesses, while leaving not-yet believers with an uncertainty of where they stand in their relationship with God. In our current day and age there has been similar ambiguity as to what the actual message of the gospel is. Many writers and pastors toss the word gospel around without ever specifically defining the term. Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians is helpful for us:

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, (1 Corinthians 15:1–4)

The gospel is the good news that Christ was born in the flesh to live a life that no one could ever live, to die a death that everyone deserved to die and to raise from the

4. David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cures* (Zondervan, 2016), 44.

dead, thus disarming the power of the curse of sin that lingers on all who are born of Adam; death. When the message of the gospel does not communicate those minimum realities, it is not the gospel. The danger that we face in complicating the gospel message is what J. Mack Stiles describes as “losing the gospel.”

Losing the gospel doesn’t happen all at once; it’s much more like a four-generation process: The gospel is accepted. The gospel is assumed. The gospel is confused. The gospel is lost. For any generation to lose the gospel is tragic. But, as Phillip Jensen says, the generation that assumes the gospel is the generation that is most responsible for the loss of the gospel. As you can imagine, both an assumed gospel and a confused gospel present particular challenges to healthy evangelism.⁵

The stakes are high when it comes to clarifying the gospel message. According to Stiles, one of the best gifts that the church can give to the next generation is clarity in the gospel. I tend to agree with this sentiment. The good news of Christ’s work on our behalf in the gospel is simple news, but in thinking about faithfully delivering the gospel to not-yet-believers through evangelism, the process is not as simple as many make it out to be.

How are we to become so familiar with the gospel that we no longer assume, confuse, and complicate the mission of the church for generations to come? We must become people who are thoroughly fluent in the language of the gospel. Fluency is not achieved solely by verb conjugation and vocabulary testing, but rather an immersion into a language. This explains why Jeff Vanderstelt, in his work *Gospel Fluency*, contends that for such a thorough understanding of the gospel, we must hear it and speak from its power in all we do.

I believe such fluency is what God wants his people to experience with the gospel. He wants them to be able to translate the world around them and the world inside of them through the lens of the gospel—the truths of God revealed in the person and work of Jesus. Gospel-fluent people think, feel, and perceive

5. J. Mack Stiles, *Marks of the Messenger: Knowing, Living and Speaking the Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2010), 40.

everything in light of what has been accomplished in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

They see the world differently. They think differently. They feel differently. When they are listening to people, they are thinking: “How is this in line with the truths of the gospel? What about Jesus and his work might be good news to this person today? How can I bring the hope of the gospel to bear on this life or situation so this person might experience salvation and Jesus will be glorified?” When they see movies, they see the themes of the gospel, and they also notice which themes represent a false gospel. They begin to evaluate the storylines of their surrounding culture in light of the story of God’s redemptive purposes in Christ Jesus, and they learn to perceive where God might already be at work around them, preparing the soil of a community and individual hearts for the seeds of the gospel to be sown. Most significantly, those who are growing in gospel fluency are experiencing ongoing transformation themselves.⁶

The key to gospel fluent speech in evangelism is a heart that is consistently being transformed through the gospel. When Christians begin to take this approach with the message of the gospel, meaning that it has power in our sanctification as well as in our justification, we are on the threshold of becoming fluent in our understanding of the message of the gospel, yet never mastering the language until we are with Christ once and for all in eternity. Transformation occurs when a person is able to move from regurgitation of terms to worship in their hearts. This type of fluent evangelism is needed in the church.

Fluency in the gospel, however, is not the same as mastery over the gospel message. The gospel is dynamic and multi-faceted news for dynamic and multi-faceted image bearers of God. Pastor Tim Keller, in his article, “One Gospel, Many Forms” explains the complexity of delivering the gospel message effectively:

So yes, there must be one gospel, yet there are clearly different forms in which that one gospel can be expressed. This is the Bible’s own way of speaking of the gospel, and we should stick with it. Paul is an example. After insisting there is only one gospel (Gal. 1:8), he then speaks of being entrusted with “the gospel of

6. Jeff Vanderstelt, *Gospel Fluency: Speaking the Truths of Jesus into the Everyday Stuff of Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 41.

the uncircumcised” as opposed to the “gospel of the circumcised” (Gal. 2:7). When Paul spoke to Greeks, he confronted their culture’s idol of speculation and philosophy with the “foolishness” of the cross, and then presented Christ’s salvation as true wisdom. When he spoke to Jews, he confronted their culture’s idol of power and accomplishment with the “weakness” of the cross, and then presented the gospel as true power (1 Cor. 1:22-25). One of Paul’s gospel forms was tailored to Bible-believing people who thought they would be justified by works on judgment day, and the other to pagans. These two approaches can be discerned in Paul’s speeches in the book of Acts, some to Jews and some to pagans.⁷

Paul tailored and contextualized the way that he presented the gospel message to his hearers. This is certainly of utmost importance when Christians are seeking to proclaim the gospel. Our understanding of the message of the gospel, our exegesis, must always be coupled with a knowledge of the people and culture that we are proclaiming the gospel to. An overly simplistic understanding of the gospel message has the tendency to lead to an oversimplified approach to evangelism which, in many cases, can make lazy assumptions about those that you are called to witness to.

Jerram Barrs speaks to this critical nature of cultural exegesis and contextualization as he makes comments about the Apostle Paul’s approach to the Athenians cultural distinctives in Acts 17.

As we consider these examples of Paul’s efforts to show his acquaintance with the ideas of the men and women who were listening to his words, we have to conclude that Paul had done his homework. He respected his hearers sufficiently and had a deep enough care for them that he had worked at understanding their ideas and their religion. In fact, as we have seen already, Paul tells us that this commitment governed all his communication and the way he lived every day: “I have become all things to all men so that by all means possible I might save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22). Paul was able to enter the culture of others in order to reach them. His motivation was love for Christ and love for those he met.⁸

7. Timothy Keller, “Tim Keller Explains the Gospel,” Acts 29, December 12, 2008, accessed March 13, 2019, <https://www.acts29.com/tim-keller-explains-the-gospel/>.

8. Jerram Barrs, *The Heart of Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 216-216.

Barrs states that contextualization *was the work* for Paul. Contextualization is very necessary, so necessary in fact that it governed Paul's approach to sharing the gospel and planting churches. He wrestled intensely to know others that they might know Christ. God is the author of contextualization. In the scriptures we see that it was out of *his love*, that he sent Jesus to become sin for us (John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 5:21) so that we could become the righteousness of God. God's love to us is a contextualized, highly incarnational love. The kind of love that moves in to dwell among us, his people—the Word *became flesh and dwelt among us* (John 1:14). Our life on the mission of God is of a similar approach—God makes his appeal through our lives in a very human way, he uses our gifts, passion, and the nuances of our distinct cultures to make his appeal (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Lastly, it seems that perhaps one of the most overlooked realities of the 20th-century growth of evangelicalism in western culture has to do with the tension of word and deed ministry.

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. (James 1:22-25)

James' admonition magnifies the tension in our individualized western culture to pit word ministry against deed ministry and deed ministry against word ministry. Many choose to proclaim the gospel in word and neglect the deed aspect of evangelism, instead leaving that for those with a more liberal agenda. On the other end of the spectrum is the idea that only doing justice will somehow lead to word ministry in time. A focus on justice is the method that many relational evangelism proponents lean toward. However,

the question that Leslie Newbigin posed in the late 20th Century sheds light on the false dichotomy that exists between the two. Why must we choose between the two?

First it is clear, that to set word and deed, preaching and action against each other is absurd. The central reality is neither word nor act, but the total life of a community enabled by the Spirit to live in Christ, sharing his passion and the power of his resurrection. Both the words and the acts of that community may at any time provide the occasion through which the living Christ challenges the ruling powers.... Second it is clear that action for justice and peace in the world is not something which is secondary, marginal to the central task of evangelism. It belongs to the heart of the matter. Jesus' action in challenging the powers that ruled the world was not marginal to his ministry, it was central to it. Without [it] there would be no gospel.⁹

Newbigin's words are a stunning rebuke to the polarization we often find in our churches about the juxtaposition of word and deed ministry; evangelism and justice. Without the life of Jesus there *would be no gospel message* to share. Thus, in our clarity of the message of the gospel, we must see the implication of the words of James and the word of Paul; that is, that "faith comes from hearing and hearing from the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17), and that as evangelists we are called to "be doers of the word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22), because in practicing this false dichotomy James informs us that we live in deception.

The Recovery of Approach Clarity in Evangelism

Out of all the recoveries that we are seeking to make as a church and as The Church there has likely been more written on the nature of approach and tactics than any other topic. Deep within the recesses of many American hearts is a distaste for evangelism because of some of the terrible approaches we have been lured into throughout time. I say *terrible* because in many of the approaches, evangelism has been

9. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 137.

distilled into a quid-pro-quo activity that stems more from fear than faith. One of these approaches has been labeled proselytism and John Stott calls it a *perversion* of evangelism.

Yet conversion is another unpopular word today. One reason for this unpopularity is the impression of arrogant imperialism that some evangelists have sometimes given. If ever our evangelism descends to the level of “empire building,” “scalp hunting” or boasting about numbers, then of course we bring the word *conversion* into disrepute.... A helpful distinction has been made by WCC, when they speak of proselytism as follows: Proselytism...is the corruption of witness. Witness is corrupted when cajolery, bribery, undue pressure or intimidation is used—subtly or openly—to bring about seeming conversion; when we put the success of our church before the honor of Christ; ...when personal or corporate self-seeking replaces love for every individual soul for whom we are concerned. Such corruption of the Christian witness indicates lack of confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit, lack of respect for the nature of man and lack of recognition of the true character of the Gospel.¹⁰

According to Stott, our distasteful approaches have predominantly been birthed through a lacking confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul indicates in Romans 15:13 our need for confidence and hope in the Holy Spirit when he pronounces a blessing over the Church, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” It’s only through the power of the Holy Spirit that the church can abound in hope and not be motivated by fear, thus leading an ineffective life in Christ. With this in mind, we must remember that although those we encounter may have their own experiences of these “perversions” of evangelism, the biggest battle we face is one that is within our hearts and minds. When we lack confidence in God’s power to raise the dead, we act in fear rather than hope and faith. Stott’s encouragement to us is an underlying stereotype that I feel we must consistently address when we speak of tactical approaches to evangelism.

10. John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, Updated and Expanded Christopher J. H. Wright (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2015), 182.

A word that we need to recover within our vocabulary of evangelism is witness. Witness is mentioned more in the Bible than any form of the word evangel. To be a witness is to testify to the power of God's work in the lives of his people. A witness is more about an identity than it is an activity. Jesus does not tell us to go witnessing, instead he says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and *you will be my witnesses* in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the Earth" (Acts 1:8). We need to recapture our identity as witnesses. When we realize and apply this distinction, Jonathan Dodson describes the impact it has on our approach:

Therefore, whenever you're sharing the gospel or praying for the salvation of others, you should be comforted that God possesses all the power to save.... The Spirit will prompt you to share with others when and if you are walking in step with him. This doesn't have to be showy, it can be a simple thought or a deep spiritual impression.¹¹

Our identity as witness makes evangelism less about performance and more about worship. I often tell the guys that I disciple, "Just tell someone about the power you have found in the person and work of Jesus in your struggle against sin this week." That is what evangelism is in its essence, a proclamation of what you have seen God do through his Spirit in history and in our own hearts.

The next issue in the recovery of approach addresses the question of "who?" Who am I supposed to be sharing the gospel with? While there is specific contextualization to consider regarding the time in which Jesus delivered these words to his disciples in salvation history, it is safe to say that these words of Jesus impact the way in which we approach the "who" of evangelism:

11. Jonathan K. Dodson, *The Unbelievable Gospel: Say Something Worth Believing* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 202.

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. And he said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’ And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.’ I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. (Luke 10:1–12)

When Jesus sends out his first group of disciples on mission, they have the exact same question that we have, “Who should we approach with the message of the Kingdom?” Jesus indicates the people that we are to spend the majority of our time with are people of peace. Mike Breen describes the importance of this approach:

Very simply, a Person of Peace is one who is prepared to hear the message of the Kingdom and the King. He is ready to receive what God will give you to say at that moment. This should be our prayer as we venture forth each day. “Lord, bring into my path today a Person of Peace, and give me the grace to speak your words to this person.” One who is not a Person of Peace will not receive what you have to say. We are not to belabor the issue. Jesus says to shake the dust off your feet and move on. No amount of coercion on our part can make someone become a Person of Peace. This is the job of the Holy Spirit; he alone can prepare a heart to hear the Gospel. Our job is to have our spiritual eyes open, looking for a Person of Peace to cross our paths. Perhaps this concept will make more sense as we see it modeled by Paul when he went out on his mission trips.¹²

The role of us as witness and evangelist to the power of God in our hearts and lives is to walk in step with the Holy Spirit by keeping our eyes and ears open to the doors that God is opening all around us to those who are ready to receive the message of

12. Mike Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*, third ed. (Greenville, SC: 3DM Publishing, 2017), 113.

the Kingdom, the gospel. The way in which we go about doing that is to announce the Kingdom, just as those 72 disciples did in Luke 10, and simply wait and see who wants more. Our announcement of this will come through personal discussion with neighbors and co-workers, our involvement within our community, and in every sphere that we do life. Some are called to proclaim it on the street corners, others are called to proclaim it in the Amazon, all are called to proclaim in Word and deed and Jesus tells us to keep a lookout for the one who actually hears the message.

George Hunter, in his work *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*, draws out a massive implication for effective life on mission; evangelism in community. Most of our current models of evangelism acknowledge the message of the mission but they do not employ the method of the mission. I could easily argue that rarely, if ever, is evangelism one-to-one in the Bible. In the one case that I can recall, Philip is literally transported away from the scene where he explains the gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-40. This is not to say there are no other instances of this in the Bible, it is just to say that this certainly is not the precedent that Jesus set for his disciples. I believe it is the reason he sent his disciples out in pairs in Luke 10. Evangelism is intended to be an endeavor to be pursued in the context of community.

In the Celtic Way, Hunter draws a distinction from the Roman model with the Celtic model of evangelism. The Roman model began with a more individualistic emphasis up until the point of conversion. However, the Celtic model turned the Monastic movement into a missional force to be reckoned with in the 5th Century:

- The Celtic model for reaching people (1) You first establish community with people or bring them into the fellowship of your community of faith [monastery].
- (2) Within fellowship [monastery], you engage in conversation, ministry, prayer,

and worship. (3) In time, as they discover that they now believe, you invite them to commit.¹³

I suppose that some may call this a “belong before you believe” method to evangelism. I see it most as a communal approach to evangelism. In this model, everyone gets to use their gifts to help people come into a saving relationship with Jesus, emphasizing both the Word aspect to evangelism and the deed aspect. In this model, the gift of hospitality, the gift of teaching, and the gift of serving all get to be used to see not-yet-believers come to faith. In the Roman model (or we could say the American model), only the outspoken, gregarious, winsome, silver-tongued wordsmith is prized as the champion evangelist. Forcing churches to adopt an evangelism method that does not focus on community is a poor model to follow. Evangelism has and always should be a community endeavor in which all the gifts are utilized for the mission.

N. T. Wright brings a helpful correction to how we view ourselves on this mission of God to take the gospel through to the ends of the Earth. He announces that we need to see ourselves in a constant state of worship on mission. All of life is worship and all of life is mission. To divorce ourselves from either is to misunderstand what Jesus has come to do in and through our hearts.

What are we here for in the first place? The fundamental answer...is that what we’re “here for” is to become genuine human beings, reflecting the God in whose image we’re made, and doing so in worship on the one hand and in mission, in its full and large sense, on the other; and that we do this not least by “following Jesus.”

The way this works out is that it produces, through the work of the Holy Spirit, a transformation of character. This transformation will mean that we do indeed “keep the rules” — though not out of a sense of externally imposed “duty,” but out of the character that has been formed within us. And it will mean that we do

13. George G. Hunter III, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism: How Christianity Can Reach the West...Again*, 10th Anniversary ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), 53.

indeed “follow our hearts” and live “authentically” — but only when, with that transformed character fully operative (like an airline pilot with a lifetime’s experience), the hard work up front bears fruit in spontaneous decisions and actions that reflect what has been formed deep within.

And, in the wider world, the challenge we face is to grow and develop a fresh generation of leaders, in all walks of life, whose character has been formed in wisdom and public service, not in greed for money or power.¹⁴

Jesus has come and indwelt his people through the Spirit to make us whole people, not fragmented people. The fragmented individual is at odds within himself. He is not what he feels like he is supposed to be, but he does not know how to become what he feels he should be. Jesus has come to set the captives free, “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free” (Galatians 5:1). We no longer have to live within the prison of fragmentation in our approach to the Great Commission. Evangelism is not about duty, instead it is about worship. Jesus has come to free us to worship him with all that we are.

In closing our review of literature, I want to share one last work that leads to the impetus of the project at hand. John Chapman, a renowned Australian speaker and evangelist wrote the following in his work, *Know and Tell the Gospel*:

Evangelism, like swimming, can only be learned by getting in and striking out. It is impossible to learn how to swim if your swimsuit never gets wet. We can give you all the instructions in the world, we can show you movies, we can tell you what it feels like, but there comes a time when you need to get wet! Once you are in the water, we can begin to refine your style, but not before.¹⁵

The place that many Christians find themselves today is the place in which Chapman is describing. We know about swimming, we have heard the different techniques and strokes, but we ourselves have never touched the water. We desire to become experts in evangelism from day one, but we do not want to struggle in the growth

14. N.T. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), 26.

15. John Chapman, *Know and Tell the Gospel*, 3rd ed. (Kingsford, NSW, Australia: Matthias Media, 2002), 200.

of refining our life on mission, which is an impossible expectation to have for ourselves.

What NCC needs is structure to help us grow in boldness and accountability as we worship Jesus on his mission. Understanding the difficulties many have faced in evangelism can only help us be more focused and centered on God's plan for sharing his message of the gospel. It is our prayer that by thoughtfully acknowledging and addressing these issues that could negatively affect evangelism, we will be able to live out effectively the plan God has for our lives.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROJECT DESIGN

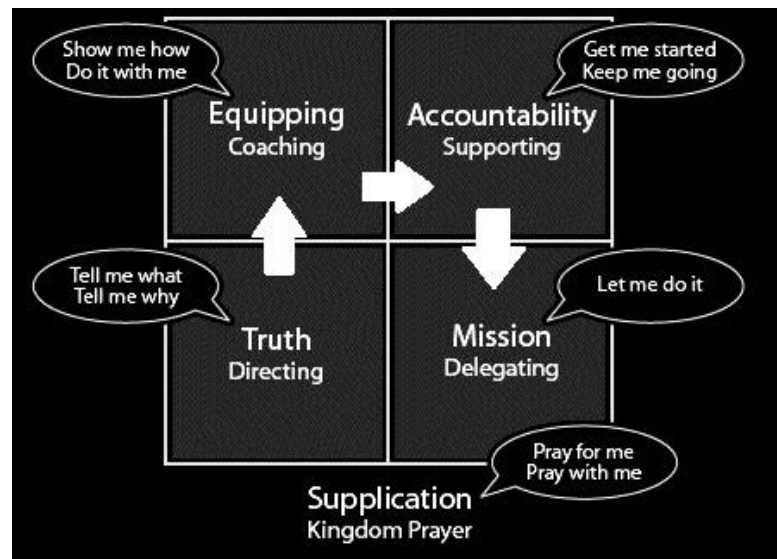
Introduction

The model of discipleship that NCC has embraced over the past several years has afforded our church the benefit of in-depth relationships, which are intended to propel us deeper into the gospel and further on the mission of God in making disciples. The mission for our Covenant Partners is not as much a head issue as it is a heart and hand issue. In other words, more knowledge does not necessarily lead to more transformation to the image of Christ or more obedience to the Word of Christ. In general, the reformed tradition of protestant churches today falls into the same category as our church seems to be in, meaning that we believe that knowledge will automatically lead to transformation. Orthodoxy only leads to orthopraxy when the knowledge is applied to our hearts. What NCC needs more than anything, when it comes to becoming responsible evangelists, is accountability and encouragement. We need a place to apply the knowledge to our hearts and through our hands in the context of community.

As I have recalled my 2016 experience of training our church in evangelism and not seeing the intended results that we desired to come from our covenant partners, it occurred to me in one of my discipleship group meetings that we already have a structure in place to facilitate deeper accountability and encouragement regarding evangelism. Training is essential to transformation, but only when it is coupled with accountability and training. Ken Blanchard, in his leadership organization, has coined a helpful term to

describe this called “Situational Leadership”.¹ Randy Pope, in his work *Insourcing*, has adapted this model for the church.²

Figure 1. “Situational Leadership” Adapted for the Church



Pope accurately articulates the dilemma NCC is facing in our desire to move from truth, through training, and on to mission. NCC has attempted to be on mission, without specifically equipping individuals on how to be on mission. We want to be supportive of them and help them understand truth, help them share truth, and be about the mission of disciple-making for Jesus. This project is the first of many steps to help NCC make responsible disciple-makers who can then go out and make responsible disciple-makers. The focus of research that this project explored is the perceived quantitative and qualitative impact of accountability on evangelistic responsibility within discipleship

1. The Center for Leadership Studies, “Situational Leadership,” accessed March 14, 2019, <https://www.situational.com/the-clc-difference/situational-leadership-what-we-do/>.

2. Randy Pope and Kittie Murray, *Insourcing: Bringing Discipleship Back to the Local Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 41.

group participants at NCC in Lawrenceville, Georgia. Therefore, the research question and hypothesis were:

Research Question: Does contextualized evangelism training and grace-motivated accountability lead to more evangelistic conversations among NCC discipleship group participants?

Hypothesis: If NCC has our discipleship group leaders and participants participate in a six-hour, two-session evangelism training course, followed by scheduled accountability discussion and prayer for evangelism for the period of three months, then we will see increased gospel proclamation among the not-yet-believers in our community. My assumption is that if we have increased accountability centered around, but not limited to, evangelism among not-yet-believers, New City Church will be a more evangelistically responsible church and thus see an increased number of conversions in our community.

Methodology

Design and Process

I taught an evangelism training course that consisted of two three-hour sessions. The first session was on Saturday, September 8, 2018, from 9am-12pm and the second session was on Sunday, September 9, 2018, in the Richards Middle School Media Center, which is the school that our portable church plant was meeting in at that time. The same group of participants participated in experimental research with a pre-test (see Appendix G) and post-test (see Appendix H) design. The pre-test was administered on September 8th, 2018 and the post-test was administered on December 14, 2018. The pool of

participants tested were all participants of discipleship groups and present for the evangelism training that took place on September 8-9. They each participated in a ten-question pre-test and post-test assessment.

Experimental Research Group

The experimental research group was 31 randomly selected people that attended the training and are committed members of discipleship groups at NCC. They were given the ten-question pre-test before the training on September 8, 2018. As a reminder about what was written in Chapter One of this thesis-project, discipleship groups are: gender specific groups of 4-7 people who, according to the group's leader, in order to be in the group, have exhibited F.A.I.T.H. (faithfulness, availability, interdependence, teachability, and humility). These groups meet from August to May each year and most groups meet either weekly or bi-weekly depending on the leader's preference. The group's focus is fivefold: truth, equipping, accountability, mission, and supplication. The hopeful outcome of 3-4 years in one of these groups (depending on spiritual maturity) is that the participant is ready to multiply their lives and the gospel into the lives of others with confidence and intentionality. In essence, our aim is to make responsible disciple-makers. The content that each group uses varies although it goes through an approval process as each group leader seeks to be well-rounded in the necessary benchmarks (Appendix B) "to present one another mature in Christ" (Colossians 1:28). Each group member has exhibited a level of maturity to be invited into a discipleship group. The same group of 31 participants who attended the training, took the pre-test, and were held evangelistically accountable for three months, completed the exact same test for post-test data collection.

The rationale behind this style of research was to maintain the integrity of the discipleship groups and the organic nature of relational evangelism. I did not want the participants to feel like they were testing over the course of the three-month period as this would certainly skew the reliability of the data and in turn the analysis of the data. The hopeful idea was to see if the mean pre-test and post-test would differ after the treatment of evangelistic accountability through our discipleship groups was administered.

Test

The ten-question pre-test (administered September 8, 2018) and post-test (administered December 14, 2018) were identical assessments where participants would give a self-assessment regarding a series of diagnostic questions that emphasize indicators of an evangelistically responsible disciple-maker. The test consisted of eight Likert Scale style questions and two open-ended questions. The questions were as follows:

New City Church Responsible Evangelism Survey

1. How confident are you in your ability to share the gospel with others?
 - Very Much
 - Considerably
 - Somewhat
 - A Little
 - Not at All
2. What is the greatest barrier you face right now in becoming a more effective witness?
 - Fear?
 - Lack of Motivation?
 - Lack of relationship with not-yet-believers?
 - Lack of Confidence?
 - Other: (leave space to fill in)

3. When is the last time you recall sharing the gospel with someone outside of the church?
 - I never have.
 - Over a year ago.
 - Within the last year.
 - Within the last month.
 - This week.
4. How often do you pray for not-yet-believers?
 - Frequently
 - Fairly Often
 - Occasionally
 - Rarely
 - Never
5. Have you personally led someone to faith in Christ?
 - No.
 - Yes.
 - Not sure.
6. How often do other Christians hold you accountable to be a responsible steward of the gospel through evangelism?
 - Daily
 - Weekly
 - Monthly
 - Yearly
 - Never
7. How often do you pray for salvation of people in other nations?
 - Daily
 - Weekly
 - Monthly
 - Yearly
 - Never
8. Do you spend intentional time with not-yet-believers?
 - Daily
 - Weekly
 - Monthly
 - Yearly
 - Never

9. Is evangelism joy or a burden to you? Please explain. (open-ended)
10. If you were to lead someone to Jesus and they became a Christian, what would you do next to help them grow? (open-ended)

Training

The training that was developed and delivered was specifically contextualized to suburban Atlanta culture. I sifted through a litany of resources before landing on a five-section, round table type delivery that utilized short lecture style teachings coupled with periods of group discussions among discipleship groups during the two-day training. The design of round table discussion in between the lecture trainings was strategic in that I wanted the group leaders and groups to grapple with the content during our training so that it would not be unfamiliar when each group was meeting independently of the whole during the four-month experiment. I entitled the training: “Inside-Out: How the Gospel Lives in and Through the Church.”

The basic presupposition of the training is that humanity, as a whole, talks about what we are consumed by. If someone is consumed with football, they will talk about football. If someone is consumed with their children, they will talk about their children. If someone is consumed with Jesus, they will talk about Jesus. When the gospel of Jesus floods our conscious and fills our minds, we, like Peter and John before the Sanhedrin in Acts 4:20, “cannot [help] but speak of what we have seen and heard.” This is the motivation of the five-section training.

Section One — The Gospel on the Inside

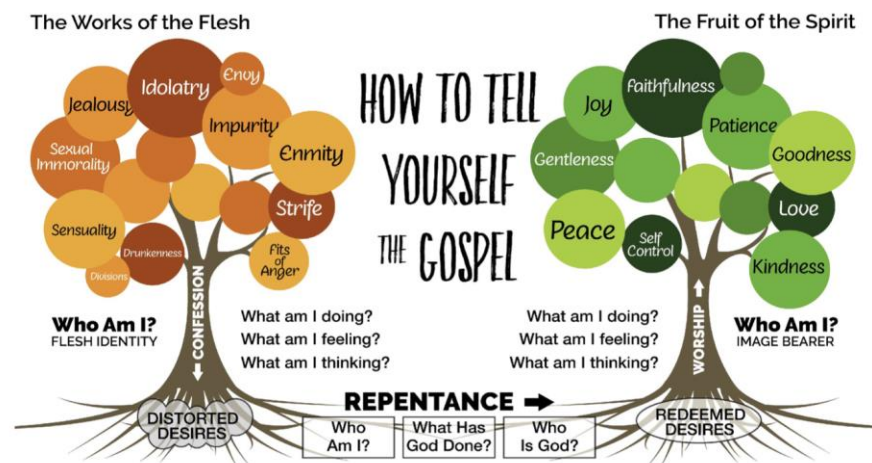
The initial part of the training intentionally focused on the most overlooked part of evangelistic health, which is the gospel's power in our own sanctification.

Sanctification is the process of being conformed more and more to the image of Christ each day as believers (Romans 8:29; 2 Thessalonian 2:13). The gospel becomes stale in our own hearts and lives because it becomes assumed in our lives. We often treat the good news as the power of our conversion but not the power of our sanctification. The peril of doing this is that we begin to assume that “since we are Christians” that the gospel will motivate all of our efforts as long as we live. However, the reality is that we must keep coming back to the basics of the faith every single day. Our power as witnesses of Jesus' kingdom building work in the world is our primary personal message that God uses to woo sinners to himself. If we lack a recollection of our witness of his work, how can we be faithful stewards of the gospel?

My approach to helping the trainees drill down on the gospel themselves was to take a tool that Jeff Vanderstelt uses in his work, *Gospel Fluency*, adapting and contextualizing it to fit our culture.³

3. Jeff Vanderstelt, *Gospel Fluency: Speaking the Truths of Jesus into the Everyday Stuff of Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 122-123.

Figure 2. How to Tell Yourself the Gospel



adapted from Jeff Vanderstelt's, "Gospel fluency"

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In this diagram, we outline Galatians 5. In Galatians 5, Paul compares the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. In the training I used an example of how we typically try to *muscle* our way into obedience by jumping from the works of the flesh to the fruit of the Spirit in our own strength. I encouraged trainees to think about an instance that they have been aware of the works of the flesh being present in their own lives. We then took that example, and each worked through what repentance in that situation would look like. After 15 minutes of time to work through the issue on their own, they were then invited to share the experience with their discipleship group seated around them.

This initial session of training was aimed at learning to seek the gospel consistently as good news for our own souls. Everyone at the training described a desire to have a fruit-bearing life that pleased God. Bearing fruit is an incredibly passive activity (John 15). As we seek to worship Jesus in our own lives and cultivate a deep level of

abiding in him, his Spirit produces fruit in our hearts and through our lives. Trainees were encouraged to think about how the gospel applies to their own lives and then learn to share the gospel out of this posture.

Section Two — Contextualization

Often times in evangelism Christians may have exegeted the scriptures but not their context. Contextualization is the process of mindfully delivering the gospel in the most effective way for the specific people you are trying to reach. Contextualization is not a term that we see mentioned in the scriptures, however it is a concept that is frequently seen in the behavior of the apostles. Because of this, I began part two of the training with a passage from 2 Corinthians.

In their case the god of this world has *blinded the minds of the unbelievers*, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:4-6, emphasis mine)

The significance of this passage of scripture on evangelism cannot be overstated. The Apostle Paul is describing the state of every unbelieving soul that has ever existed: blind to spiritual truth. During the training I used a visual example of someone walking in one direction blindfolded. I then described what it is like to hear the heed of warning when you are blind. Someone may be telling you to turn around, however, if you cannot see the danger of where you are going and the reasoning for turning around, you will not turn around. I then took the blindfold off and described how someone could give the same warning to someone who is not blindfolded, and the person would turn (repent)

from the danger. As Christians we often mistakenly believe that it is our job to take off the blindfold from unbelievers, however our job is to declare the gospel with our lives and trust the Holy Spirit to remove the blindfold. This teaching set the stage to look at two scriptures from the book of Galatians where we are able to see the Apostle Paul speak about how he and the Apostle Peter contextualized the gospel differently to their audiences who were each “blindfolded” without the Holy Spirit giving them eyes to see.

The clearest example of contextualization in the New Testament comes from Paul’s letter to the Galatians. In Galatians 1:8 Paul writes, “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.” In this sentence, Paul indicates that there is a tendency to pervert the gospel. However, just one short chapter later he would write, in Galatians 2:7, “On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised.” Paul is speaking about contextualization. Tim Keller describes this in his article, “The Gospel in All Its Forms.”

When Paul spoke to Greeks, he confronted their culture’s idol of speculation and philosophy with the “foolishness” of the cross, and then presented Christ’s salvation as true wisdom. When he spoke to Jews, he confronted their culture’s idol of power and accomplishment with the “weakness” of the cross, and then presented the gospel as true power (1 Cor. 1:22-25).⁴

Keller is describing the necessity of a contextualized gospel. After explaining this to the trainees, I then walked them through an exercise where I had half of my group look at the contextual evangelistic approach of Peter in Acts 2:14-41 and then the other half of the group look at Paul’s contextual approach to evangelism in Acts 17:16-34. The participants then reported their findings to the entire class. The follow-up question after

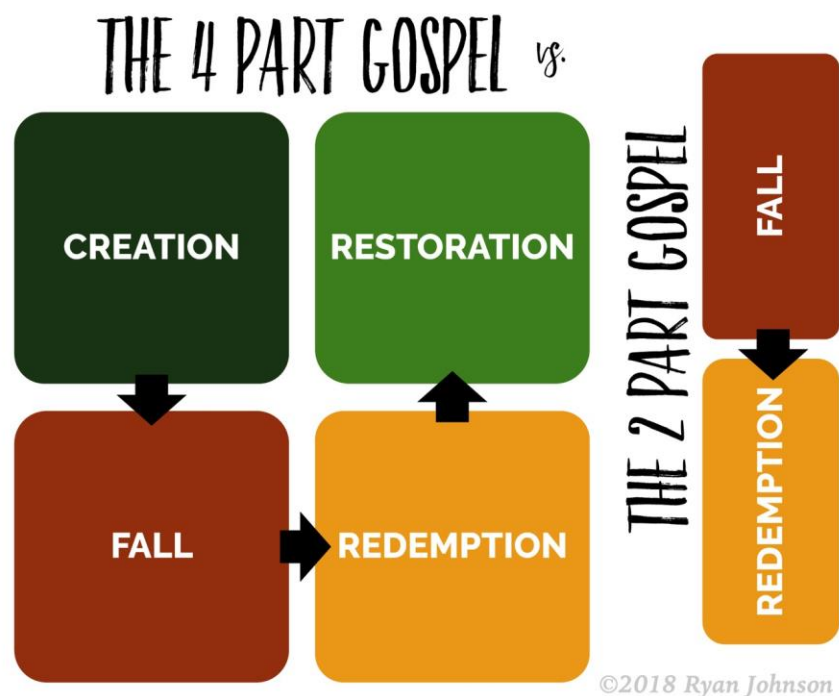
4. Tim Keller, “The Gospel in All Its Forms,” *Christianity Today* 29 (Spring 2008): 15.

this then encouraged each participant to think about and discuss the contextual implications of each of their own “mission fields.”

Section Three — Theological Framework of Evangelism

The aim of part three of the training was to address the truncated nature of the gospel that is so prevalent in southern evangelical culture. My awareness of the necessity of this module of the training has already been notated in Chapter One, as there is serious theological ambiguity about the nature of conversion in our context. The best way that I have found to describe it is the difference in a four-part and a two-part gospel narrative.

Figure 3. The Four-part Gospel vs. the Two-part Gospel

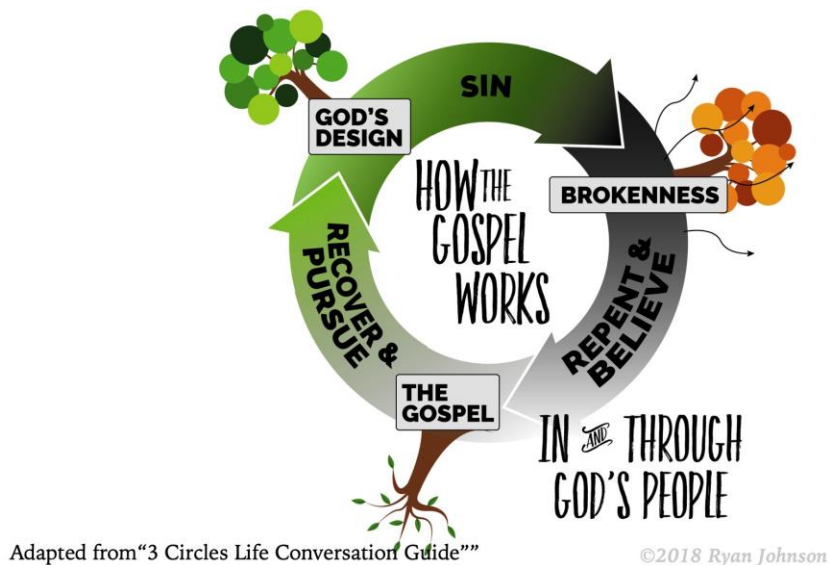


The two-part, or truncated gospel narrative, is not a false gospel; it is just not a full gospel. During the training, I shared an example of a young man that I had the opportunity to share the gospel with. This particular young man was in a same-sex relationship and had been for years. He hesitantly met with me over the course of several months. During our time together, I prayed for him and decided never to assume he was not a Christian. During our time together, he invited me to lead a Bible study where we could speak candidly about the Bible and our lives. If this conversation were to be from a two-part gospel vantage point, I would have started by his obvious sin of sexual immorality. However, instead I decided to start in creation, in Genesis 1. He and I spent several months working through the first several chapters of Genesis and the Holy Spirit began to convict his heart as we studied the Word. Our time together came to a culminating point when he confessed, “I love Jesus, I have just got to figure out whether I am going to follow him or not because right now I am living in conflict with his Word.” The Gospel was clearly declared, and I had the opportunity to encourage this man. Our conversation came to a close and I have not had any substantial conversation with him since, but I do think about and pray for him often. In that moment, that was my role, and I am not sure if he is following Jesus today or if he, like the rich young ruler (Mark 10:17-27), counted the cost and at that point decided that the cost was too great.

I taught our trainees to think about the four-part gospel as four different doors that people open up to us through their lives. We can enter through their opened door and at any time, when we know the gospel ourselves, we can make a bee-line for Jesus. At this point, I gave them some time around their tables to discover and discuss about ways in which they have truncated the gospel message. I then shared a tool with them that Dustin

Willis and Aaron Coe developed in their book, *Life on Mission: Joining the Everyday Mission of God*, which we adapted for our training purposes.⁵

Figure 4. How the Gospel Works



This tool is one of many ways to illustrate what happens to someone who comes to saving faith through the gospel message. The thing that I like about this tool more than anything else is that it includes a four-part gospel message. The trainees were able to see the tool in action as I described the recent gospel conversation I just discussed and showed them how, if helpful, I could have drawn the tool out in our conversation.

Section Four — The Gospel on the Outside

The fourth section of the training that I lead our trainees through are three evangelistic methodology principles. The three principles that I shared with them are: in

5. Dustin Willis and Aaron Coe, *Life on Mission: Joining the Everyday Mission of God*, New edition (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014).

the context of community, with a theology of place, and to the person of peace. Allow me to briefly explain each of the principles.

Evangelism “in the context of a community” is an attempt to unhitch our methodology from the hyper-individualistic westernized approach to life that has permeated our thinking and living since the days of the Enlightenment. During the training, I posed a provocative question: “How often do we see personal evangelism in the Bible?” To answer the question, we do not see it very often. However, far more often we see a communal approach to evangelism that involves a community of people coming around others with the message of the gospel. I taught that we need a “both and” approach to personal and communal evangelism. The beauty of evangelism in the context of community is that it allows for a fuller expression of the body of Christ to be utilized on mission. To illustrate, I shared the story of a young lady who had come to saving faith in our MC this past year. A foster family brought her to group, my wife opened up our home, a member of the MC was a social worker who understood her story and connected with her, and a young single man shared the gospel with her through a book that he had read, and then some three months later I baptized her. There was not one of us that led her to faith, as we all did it together.

Evangelism “with a theology of place” was the next principle I taught about. I started this section by sharing two passages of scripture with the group.

Figure 5. Evangelism “With a Theology of Place”

PART IV—THE GOSPEL ON THE OUTSIDE

1. In the Context of Community

2. With a Theology of Place

1. Jeremiah 29:4-7

- “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

2. Acts 17:26-27

- And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,

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Jeremiah 29 and Acts 17 open our mind to a more holistic way of living than most of us in an American context are familiar with. When Paul is in Athens in Acts 17 before the Areopagus, we see the sovereignty of God at work in our lives through place. I taught that there is not one moment in our lives where we have lived in a country, in a city, or on a street that God has not ordained. God is a God of place. Yet, so often we in metro Atlanta only think of place in ways that benefit us. We ask questions like: Is the resale value good? Are the schools of good quality? Do the people keep up with their yardwork? While these questions must be questions that are asked, rarely do we ask the question, “How can the Kingdom of God advance through God calling us to this place?”

Jeremiah writes about the Lord’s instructions of how the Israelites ought to live while enduring Babylonian exile. I taught that, while we might think that God’s people ought not to care about the people and the place of their exile, we get exactly the opposite

message from Jeremiah 29: plant gardens, build houses, take wives. This is language of deep concern for place. Why does God call Israel to care so deeply for place? When we care for place—when we care for the welfare of the people and place that God has called us to, it is a way of caring for ourselves because, according to Jeremiah, our own welfare is wrapped up in the community God has placed us in.

The last of the three principles I taught our trainees regarding the gospel on the outside was “to the person of peace.”

Figure 6. Evangelism “To the Person of Peace”

PART IV—THE GOSPEL ON THE OUTSIDE

1. In the Context of Community
2. With a Theology of Place
3. To the Person of Peace
 1. How do I know who God is calling me to?
 2. Read Luke 10:1-11
 1. **Discussion:** How does Jesus tell us to evangelize about the Kingdom?

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When teaching about the principle of sharing the gospel “to the person of peace,” I exegeted Luke 10:1-11. The major concern that this teaching addressed with our trainees is the paralyzing feeling of not knowing who we are supposed to be sharing the

gospel *with*. In Luke 10, Jesus sends out seventy-two disciples with the message of the coming kingdom. While this seems like a pretty straightforward plan, there is a catch in the plan because of how Jesus sends them and what he tells them to do. Jesus sends these disciples out without extra money, food or clothing. He sends these disciples out literally to be needy among those that they are sharing the message of the Kingdom with. He says that if someone is open and interested to your message, stay with them. Allow them to care for you and stay as long as you can in that one place, declaring the Kingdom to them. If someone does not receive your message, and they are not peaceful and welcoming to what you have to say to them about the Kingdom, shake the dust off your feet and keep moving.

I then asked the question to the trainees, “Is this how you want to share the gospel?” At this point, nearly everyone in the room shook their heads indicating the nature of the counter-cultural call that Jesus gave his disciples that day. As westerners from the south, the last thing we want to be among our neighbors is needy. Yet somehow, in God’s providence, the message of his gospel extends through our acceptance of others’ hospitality toward us. I closed this session of the training by asking the groups to discuss this methodology with their groups, specifically about Jesus’ call to move on to others when they do not respond to the message.

Section Five — Becoming Responsible Stewards of the Gospel

The last section of the training was simply a short presentation of different tools that could be added to the tool belt of each participant as they live on mission. I also reminded them about the words of Jesus in Matthew 9:37-38, “The harvest is plentiful,

but the laborers are few; therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the Harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” The instruction from this passage was that we need to be praying for one another to have opportunities to share the gospel and boldness to share the gospel. We see in the Bible that we are called to pray for one another and the lost. The training then concluded with instructions to prioritize this training as a portion of each discipleship groups’ time together over the next three months.

Period of Encouragement and Accountability

Throughout the course of the next three months, I made a monthly effort to send an email to our 19 discipleship group leaders encouraging them to keep this as a focal point in their group meetings. On September 21, 2018, I sent the following email to our group leaders:

Hey Gang,

I just wanted to personally thank each of you for leading a Discipleship group at NCC this year. To follow up with the training that we completed a couple of weeks ago, I would love to know any constructive feedback that you have. I’m beginning to use this teaching outside of NCC pretty frequently to help train other pastors, church planters and missionaries and I’d like to fine tune it as much as possible. You can respond directly to this email to do so.

Also, I’m going to make it my aim, over the next three months to remind you as the leaders to make “mission” in our discipleship group meetings a priority. It’s the only way that it will be woven into the fabric of your people’s lives. Even if only one person in the group seems to be getting it, let them debrief before everyone, it brings the whole group up. In January I will send out the same survey that I sent out last month to each of you and your groups. The purpose is to see if anything has changed in our DNA because of this emphasis. This is a critical piece of the research for my dissertation. Thanks for your help!

Resources to help you:

Debriefing a Spiritual Conversation:

--Here's an example of how this could work in your group:

1. Prayer for Evangelism—Pray for people, pray for your members to have boldness and Faith, Prayer for the church and the world.
2. Discussion of Evangelism Training, how do you plan to tell people about Jesus?
3. Evangelism TRIAD, 3 People get together who are praying for 3 people to come to faith.

How to debrief a spiritual conversation:

1. How did you notice that it was time to share the gospel with this person?
2. Where is that person's spiritual thirst? (How did you know that they were a person of peace?)
3. What questions were raised? What questions did you ask?
4. In hindsight, what would you have done differently in that spiritual conversation?
5. What do you think is the person's next step, spiritually speaking?
6. Do you feel stuck in anyway?
7. How can we pray for you in that endeavor?⁶

I sent out similar notes to our discipleship group leaders on October 18, 2018, and November 24, 2018, as well as a way to encourage and hold them accountable to keep this in front of their groups. I received responses from many of our group leaders during that time about how encouraged they were to be having an evangelistic focus. Personally, in my own group, five out of the seven guys shared the gospel with someone during the three-month period.

⁶ This is the copy of the email I sent out to group leaders.

CHAPTER FIVE

OUTCOMES AND OBSERVATIONS

Introduction

The impetus for this thesis-project grew out of a holy discontent that I had as a young church planter comparing this season of ministry to past seasons that I had experienced. Planting a church in suburban Atlanta has been, as one friend said it, the most “evangelistically frustrating” experience of my ministry career. Through this project my heart has been knit to the people of NCC and the people of my community in a profound way that goes beyond statistics about church conversions and baptisms. I have had a first-hand encounter with the heart of the people of NCC that has left me blessed and humbled to be called their pastor; longing for us all to experience more of God’s pleasure upon our lives as we seek to live on mission together. Before writing the first chapter of this project, I had developed a culmination of resources that one of the elders in our church asked me to teach, so I did. To my surprise, the content and delivery of the training received rave reviews, but seemingly to no avail. Revival did not seem to break out in our church or in our city the way I had imagined in my mind.

The fault of mine going into this church plant was that I had unrealistic expectations of what “God *should* do” through my leadership and zeal for lost souls. I was prideful and arrogant to presume anything about the Lord’s plan for my life and ministry here in metro Atlanta. The reality that this thesis-project pressed me to discover was that *God is at work in THIS church and in THIS man*. Comparison has a tendency to

rob our souls of the new seasons of ministry that God draws us into, draining us of the joy of our salvation.

This thesis-project set out as an attempt to discover the breakdown of robust training and how that manifests itself in robust application, specifically in regard to living an evangelistically responsible lifestyle. My hypothesis was that, if NCC has our discipleship group leaders and participants participate in a six-hour, two-session evangelism training course followed by scheduled accountability discussion and prayer for evangelism for the period of three months, then we will see increased gospel proclamation among the not-yet-believers in our community leading to more conversions in our community and in NCC. The following section highlights the findings of the pre-test and post-test we performed on the 31 random participants that were a part of the training and accountability process we completed. I will discuss major findings, discovered limitations, unexpected outcomes, and final observations.

Major Findings

The approach I took in data analysis was to examine major themes across all of the assessment questions regarding evangelism through summary statements. Some questions were similar, and because of this each assessment questions may or may not have a major finding. Major findings of the data analysis revealed from the pre-test (see Appendix G) and post-test (see Appendix H) are as follows.

Growing Confidence in Sharing the Gospel

The first question that I asked our participants in the ten-question survey is, “How confident are you in your ability to share the gospel with others?” The design of this question was to help determine the driving factor for the lack of conversions we were observing among our trainees. I wanted to gauge confidence levels and then pursue the reasons behind the confidence or lack of confidence in sharing the gospel. On our pre-test, eight of 31 participants indicated that they were a little confident or not at all confident in sharing the gospel with others. On our post-test, three months later, that number was reduced to five out of 31 participants being either a little confident or not confident at all in sharing the gospel. This data indicates that three out of the 31 participants grew tremendously in their own confidence to be able to share the gospel. This is a very encouraging statistic to me because it reveals that training along with accountability and discipling relationships can have a significant impact on our ability to be on mission.

Honesty in Lack of Relationships

Question two of the assessment was also designed to get at the source of the barriers to obedience in evangelism by asking, “What is the greatest barrier you face right now in becoming a more effective witness?” These results probably shocked me the most of any of the results I received because the responses indicated an increase in the barrier of participants having a lack of relationships with unbelievers. In the pre-test eight of 31 of the participants identified a lack of relationships with unbelievers to be their biggest barrier in being an effective witness while in the post-test, 15 of 31 of participants

identified “lack of relationships with unbelievers” to be the biggest barrier in their effectiveness as a witness. These statistics result in an increase of seven of the 31 participants likely coming to a realization that they lacked these relationships when they sought to evangelize.

Likewise, in question eight of the assessment, I noticed a similar trend about honesty. In the pre-test, four of the 31 participants confessed that they *never* spend intentional time with not-yet-believers. However, after the participants were trained and held accountable for three months, that number rose from four of 31 to a whopping ten of 31 participants indicating that they *never* spend time with not-yet-believers. The only sense that I can make from this dramatic shift is that there is an *honesty* present that these bold and humble participants were not aware of when they took the pre-test. I commend these participants for their honesty as it is a humbling reality to assess oneself in such a way.

It is possible that many within our church body at NCC set out to share the gospel with people as they were now being held accountable to do it, and they needed to report back to their groups only to find that they did not have any relationships with unbelievers. I think this is an area that NCC can come alongside our covenant partners in moving forward.

Active Evangelists are Becoming More Active

In question three we asked the question, “When is the last time you recall sharing the gospel with someone outside of NCC?” The statistics basically stayed the same, with the exception of how many people were sharing the gospel with folks within the last

month, where there was a rise from seven of 31 in the pre-test to ten of 31 in the post-test. Given the timeframe that the participants were evaluated, it seems as if those that had been evangelistically active before the pre-test were *more* active within the last three months and that those who were not engaged within the last year in evangelism outside the church, 11 of 31 participants remained inactive.

This is an interesting analysis because it proves a principle that Jesus mentions in the gospel which is the parable of the talents found in Matthew 25:14-30. In summary, Jesus says that those who are faithful with a little will be entrusted with much. When I contextualize this to our conversation about evangelism, it means that those who are actively sharing the gospel will continue to grow in influence and stewardship, but those who do not faithfully seek to share the gospel have difficulty understanding the kingdom of God and the priorities of his Kingdom and will remain stagnant and unfruitful. My prayer for the 11 of 31 participants that have not shared the gospel within the last year is that they would have the courage and faith to step out with zeal for Jesus and his Kingdom.

Decline in Local Evangelistic Prayer

On question four, when asked, “How often do you pray for not-yet-believers?” on the pre-test, nine of the 31 participants indicated that they *frequently* prayed for not-yet-believers in their personal times of devotion and in group settings. However, in the post-test, only six of 31 of the participants indicated that they *frequently* prayed for not-yet-believers. This decline in the frequency of prayer could possibly be attributed to a more honest assessment of the subject’s prayer life. I would have expected prayer to increase

as we seek the Holy Spirit to raise the dead through conversion, but exactly the opposite has occurred; we now pray less. Again, I think this is connected to the accountability focus that we have seen in questions one and two as we are now seeing a greater awareness of reality in our spiritual disciplines through the accountable structure.

Conversion Growth

On a more positive note, on question five, we asked participants if they had personally had the opportunity to lead someone to Christ before. On the pre-test 13 of 31 of those tested indicated that they believed they had. While on the post-test, 15 of 31 of the participants indicated that they had personally led someone to Christ before. This is a growth in conversions in just a three-month period! This could indicate a prior recognition that was not noted before or this indicates that people have been coming to faith in just these last three months.

Growing Evangelistic Accountability

On another positive note, our discipleship groups are considerably more accountable to living on mission after three short months of testing. During the pre-test, 11 of the 31 participants indicated that someone holds them accountable monthly, weekly, or daily to share the gospel. While on the post-test, 20 of the 31 participants said that they were now being held accountable at least monthly to share the gospel with others. This converts to a nine-person gain in accountability in evangelism through our discipleship groups. The implications of this pattern have the potential to lead to many conversions in the life of our church, our community, and the world. Romans 10:17 says,

“So, faith comes from hearing, and hearing from the Word of Christ.” Thirty percent more people at NCC are now being asked if they are scattering the seed of the gospel than we had three months ago. This is an encouraging statistic to celebrate.

Global Prayer Growth

Question seven was aimed at examining global evangelistic prayer habits. I was deeply pleased to discover that in just three short months, 15 of the 31 participants were praying for the salvation of the nations on a monthly basis. This statistic is up from nine of 31 on the pre-test assessment praying monthly for the salvation of the nations. This statistic indicates growth in a great commission lifestyle within the participants. Jesus sent his disciples out make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20) and then gave them power to take the gospel to all nations (Acts 1:8). Disciples that are growing in obedience to Jesus’ great commission command should be growing in an embrace of the call to share the gospel with all nations and this begins in the prayer life of the believer.

Joyful Obedience

The last two open-ended questions were centered on the feeling of evangelism and confidence in the providing next steps for new believers. The general pattern of the responses to the first question, “Is evangelism a joy or a burden to you? Please explain,” were moving in the direction of joy (see Appendix G). It seems that most participants did not agree with the way in which the question was framed as there was a sense of directness that did not accommodate more feelings than “joy” or “burden”. However, as I sifted through the responses, the feeling of evangelism seemed to shift more toward a

joyful obedience than it did in the initial responses. I think this is a helpful indication to take note of as it seems that, in large part, Christians do not like the idea of accountability. The more that accountability in evangelism was a normal part of the participants' ongoing discipleship and pursuit of obedience, it seemed more joyful to them.

Confidence in Discipling New Believers

The last question of the assessment was aimed at revealing the confidence the participants had in discipling new believers. The question was, "If you were to lead someone to Jesus and they became a Christian, what would you do next to help them grow?" The responses to this question did not change much from the pre-test to the post-test. This consistency indicates that the participants have confidence in helping new believers grow in their faith. Most responses indicated the need to get new believers in the Word and in community. This is something we talk about often at NCC, which is refreshing to see that truth is sticking with them.

Discovered Limitations

Throughout the last several months of training, discipling, and equipping leaders toward evangelistic responsibility, I have discovered a few limitations to the design of my thesis-project.

The Need for Individual Anonymous Identifiers

I made the mistake of doing a completely anonymous test with the same 31 participants. My desire was to keep it anonymous in hopes that the participants would answer the assessment more honestly. However, in doing so, I limited the potential for tracking specific trends within individuals. In hindsight, I should have given a four-digit code to each of the 31 participants as one of their questions so that I could track progress with each individual. That was a costly mistake that hindered my ability to more accurately track the data of each of the participants.

The Need for Subgroups

Another costly mistake in the design of my test is that I really needed to group the participants into subgroups. An ideal situation would have been to make nineteen subgroups, one for each of the discipleship groups. If I would have taken the step to do this, it would have added another layer of data to be able to track trends across the groups and thus be able to see the trends within each group. I could have looked at outliers on both sides of the performance spectrum. This tweak of adding subgroups would have given us more accurate data at the group and leader level, which would reveal how I could more specifically help each of the discipleship groups and leaders. Having functional subgroups would have helped me to account for my own discipleship group leaders. In the current setup that I used, I had no way of holding the leaders accountable to teach and lead their groups in the way that I coached them to do. Next time I will add this feature into the process.

The Need for More Time

Lastly, I think the test simply needed more time. If we would have given an entire discipleship group year, which is September to May, we would have been able to see the groups and individuals process and implement this practice into their groups and personal disciplines more. This would have likely led to more realistic statistics. As it is, the results lend themselves to self-starters who are able to implement practices and turn them into habits very quickly. I now am aware that not everyone implements habits into their lives at the same rate, especially those participants that were new to their discipleship group this year. Effective accountability comes through grace-saturated relationships that are built over time; three months simply is not enough time to cultivate that type of culture within a discipleship group.

Unexpected Outcomes

Many of the outcomes that were analyzed during the post-test observation period had somewhat anticipated outcomes as I have written about. However, two things have occurred that need to be mentioned that were not expected. The first one is the glaring oversight of NCC covenant partners not having unbelieving friends. When I set out to train our discipleship groups about evangelism, I made the assumption that everyone knows and has unbelieving friends and that everyone knows how to make friends with unbelievers. This surprise came from the data, but it has also surfaced in several conversations among discipleship group participants, and not only in that but also among our discipleship group leaders. For the most part, we do not have unbelieving friends.

Somehow, in our spiritual formation process, we have forgotten what it is like to simply be friends with others. I certainly believe that this will require some elementary training of what it is like to live on mission. Perhaps a sermon series on friendship and gospel neighboring along with some training through our discipleship groups about having margin in our lives for others would be a good next step. The more I consider this, the more I believe that this issue of not having friendships with unbelievers centers on pride; specifically selfishness. Cultivating friendships with people of a different faith or no faith requires a degree of intentionality that cannot be artificial. If NCC covenant partners are going to be effective on mission, we have to learn to love selflessly like Jesus did, having the margin to share our most precious commodity, which is our time. This could even indicate that the leadership of the church needs to free up our people from the busyness of what's going on inside the structure of our church so as to not create an expectation that is unrealistic for our covenant partners. One of the ways that we are seeking to do this in the near future is to begin to relax the expectation that everyone must be involved in an MC and a D-Group. We are beginning to see that it is a defeating expectation that could have the opposite results that we intend. This will be something to explore in the future for our leadership.

The second unexpected outcome of this thesis-project is similar to the first, a glaring oversight. I was recently speaking with our denominational global missions organization about evangelism as some of our covenant partners are employed by them and I discovered the most astonishing thing. Many full-time missionaries struggle with the same thing that NCC struggles with, a lack evangelistic faithfulness. Over the course of the last six months, I was invited to train a group of missionaries and that has now led

to an ongoing relationship with them over the next year to train and coach missionaries in evangelism. It will consist of recording the training that I have developed through this project (Appendix F) and coaching cohorts of missionaries on a weekly basis as they are preparing to enter the mission field.

I have to admit, I was initially dumfounded at the prospect of missionaries that struggle to share the gospel with unbelievers. However, the root of the issue lies in the hands of the pastors that are responsible for equipping those missionaries before they are called to global missions in their sending churches. As I have considered that reality, I have made it my aim to do all that I can to help the church take the gospel to the world and to teach others to be evangelistically responsible disciple-makers.

Final Observations

The remarkable thing about this academic exercise of seeking to see the effectiveness of accountability, in both the context of discipling relationships and evangelistic faithfulness, did not initially lead me to the results that I desired to see. I had imagined something like a *silver bullet* effect on our church, where all of a sudden, we would experience revival and see conversion upon conversion come through our intentionality. That has not happened. In fact, although the data has presented two reported conversions through the self-assessments offered through this project, I have no idea who they are and if they are legitimate. Statistically speaking, NCC is sharing the gospel more because we are holding one another accountable to do that. While I thought that this was the biggest issue at stake for the future multiplication of our church, what I

discovered through his process is that it is actually just one of many things that we need to trust the Holy Spirit to grow us in.

Optimistically speaking, this project has potentially led our church to make a global impact through the training of missionaries around the world. As I ponder that thought, I am convicted by how little I see of God and his purposes around the world in the grand scheme of my own life. I am often focused on granular details and can miss what God is doing beyond myself. Moving forward, my prayer is that the name and fame of Jesus would permeate the world through the ministry that this thesis-project has cultivated for myself and NCC to be a part of.

APPENDIX A

DISCIPLESHIP GROUP COVENANT

VISION & COMMITMENTS FOR MENS' DISCIPLESHIP

Discipling others is the process by which a Christian (with a life worth emulating) commits himself, for an extended period of time, to a few individuals (who have been won to Christ) for the purpose of aiding and guiding their spiritual growth to maturity and equipping them to reproduce themselves in the next spiritual generation.

OUR VISION FOR YOUR LIFE

To see you have deepening intimacy with Jesus
To see you grow as a godly man, and if applicable as a husband and father
To see you be faithful to the Church and engage in the Great Commission
To see you experience ongoing multiplication of your life into other men

MY COMMITMENT TO YOU

1. To engage you intentionally and relationally to draw you toward Christlikeness
2. To be vulnerable and real about my life and my relationships
3. To meet with you regularly in group and frequently one-on-one
4. To consider your need for development to become all that God intends for you
5. To be faithful to the Church, my family, and my vocation

YOUR COMMITMENT TO THE GROUP AND TO ME

1. To engage the other guys both during group time and in-between
2. To be vulnerable and real about your life and your relationships
3. To initiate time with me and the other guys outside of group
4. To regularly attend group meetings prepared and ready to engage
5. To be faithful to the Church, your family, and your vocation

DISCIPLESHIP COVENANT

And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

2 Timothy 2:2

I understand that the discipleship process was modeled by Jesus in his relationship with his disciples and further explained by the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 2:2. Therefore, I commit to strive towards the qualities listed below and their implications in my life for the glory of God, the accomplishment of the Great Commandment and the Great Commission, and the great benefit it will bring to myself and others.

FAITHFUL

I commit to be faithful in my walk with God.
I commit to be faithful in the development of honest and open discipleship relationships.

AVAILABLE

I commit to be available to God and his Spirit; to obey his prompting at any moment.
I commit to be available to spend time with others in a discipleship relationship.

INTERDEPENDENT

I commit to be interdependent through a balance of taking personal responsibility while also allowing others to help me reach God's intended potential.
I commit to participate in discussions and be accountable to my goals and the basics of the Christian life.

TEACHABLE

I commit to be teachable by God, through his Word, his Church, and his people.
I commit to be humble, as I desire to learn from life experiences and those God has placed around me.

HUNGRY

I commit to be hungry to pursue God's Word, work, will, and ways.
I commit to initiate and take responsibility to further God's work in my life.

Group Member

APPENDIX B

DISCIPLESHIP GROUP BENCHMARKS

Discipleship Curriculum Goals

Curriculum Doesn't Make Disciples – People Make Disciples

New City Church gives discipleship group leaders freedom to take any approach as long as the following Plan and Benchmarks are achieved.

THE PLAN

T.E.A.M.S

Our plan to develop people who take responsibility for growth in grace is to provide the five essential ingredients for life change:

- **Truth** is that which God has revealed for his people to know, understand, and obey. A grasp of the truth is essential to a Christian's development.
- **Equipping** is massaging God's truth into life so that it becomes understandable and usable. Knowledge alone is not sufficient; a person must be able to use and apply God's truth.
- **Accountability** is being asked hard questions in order to promote godly behavior, and support and encourage group members on their spiritual journey. A person may have a grasp of the truth and be equipped to use it, but that doesn't mean they will actually follow through.
- **Mission** is engaging the lost world with the intention of imparting the gospel. Mission provides motivation to put truth and equipping into use. Group members should be asked mission questions every meeting to encourage them to relate to those without Christ and seek opportunities to have the privilege of sharing the gospel.
- **Supplication** is engaging in conversation with God. Prayer must support all truth, equipping, accountability, and mission. Ultimately, spiritual maturity is a result of God's work; we must not presume that any process or group is the secret to spiritual growth.

THE BENCHMARKS

- | | | |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| 1. Assurance of Salvation | 6. Christian Fellowship – The Importance of Living in Community | 18. Dealing with Sin |
| 2. Quiet Time | 7. Prayer | 19. Assurance of Forgiveness |
| 3. Victory Over Sin | 8. Personal Testimony | 20. Second Coming of Christ |
| 4. Separation from Sin | 9. Lordship of Christ | 21. Mission: We All Have a Role to Play in the Advancement of the Gospel |
| a. Depravity | 10. Faith | 22. Follow-Up |
| b. Need for Grace | 11. Love | 23. Giving |
| 5. The Bible | 12. The Tongue | 24. World Vision |
| a. Hearing the Word | 13. The Use of Time | |
| b. Reading the Word | 14. The Will of God | |
| c. Bible Study | 15. Obedience | |
| d. Scripture Memory | 16. The Holy Spirit | |
| e. Meditation on the Word | 17. Satan – Know Your Enemy | |
| f. Application of the Word | | |

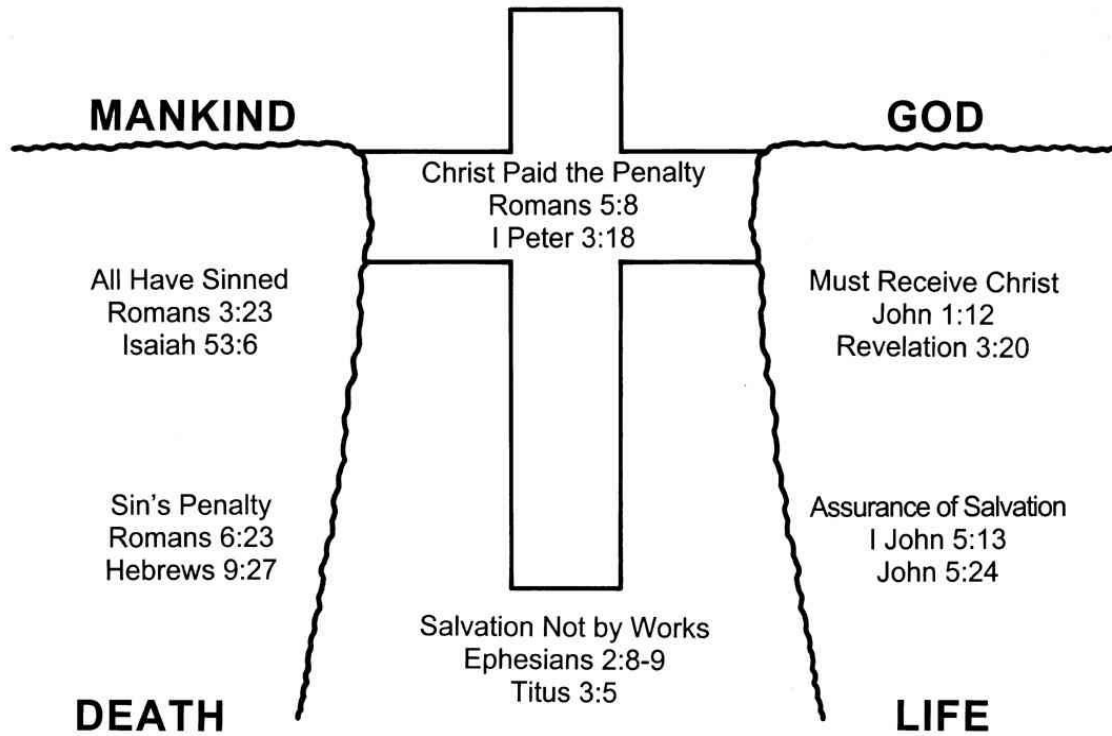
APPENDIX C
 RICHARDS MIDDLE SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS
 LAWRENCEVILLE, GA

Student Data (2014–15 to 2016–17)

	School Year		
	14–15	15–16	16–17
Enrollment	1572	1869	2051
+American Indian/Alaskan Native*	0%	0%	0%
+Asian*	8%	10%	9%
+Black/African American*	44%	37%	35%
+Hispanic or Latino, <i>any race</i>	33%	43%	45%
+Multiracial, <i>two or more races</i> *	3%	3%	3%
+Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander*	0%	0%	0%
+White*	11%	7%	8%
Special Education	13%	14%	14%
ESOL	8%	11%	12%
Free/Reduced Lunch	81%	80%	80%
Average Attendance	97%	97%	96%

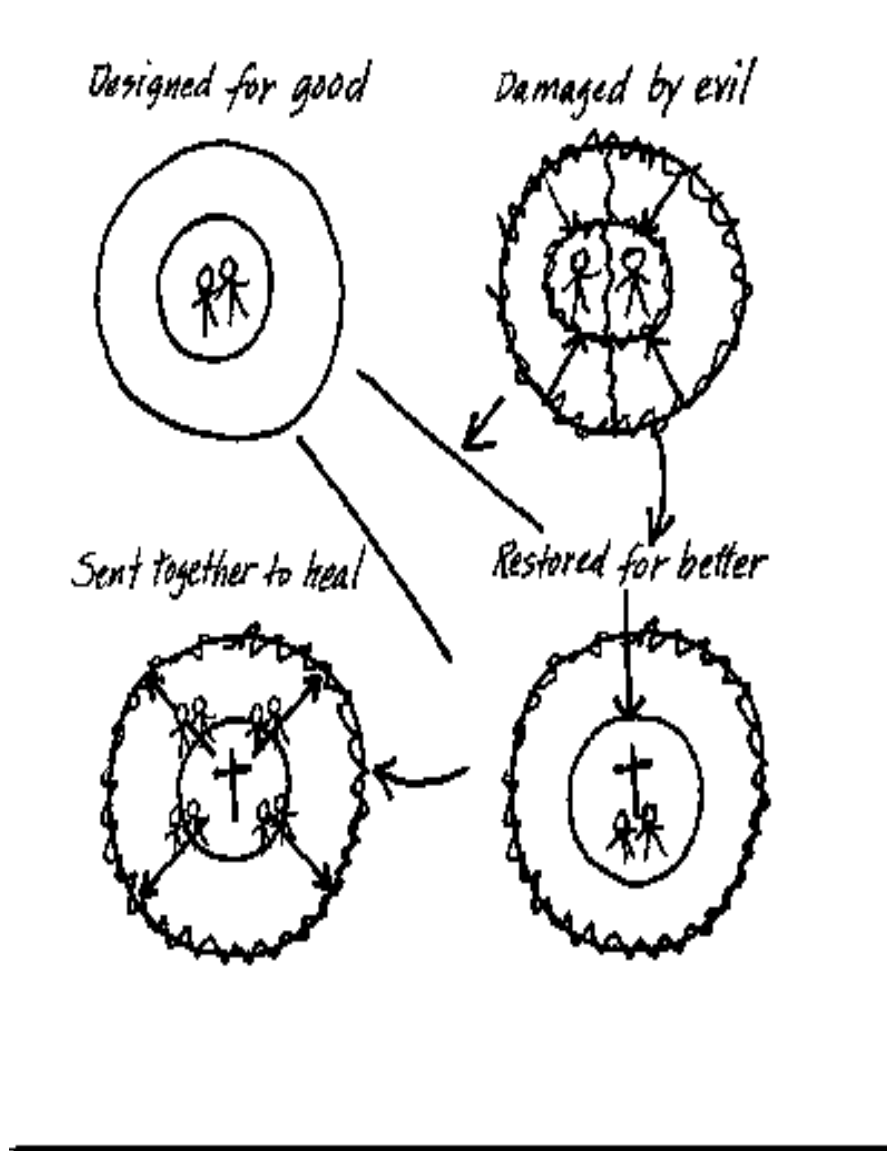
**Not Hispanic or Latino*

APPENDIX D
THE BRIDGE DIAGRAM¹



1. "The Bridge to Life," Navigators, accessed March 11, 2019, <https://www.navigators.org/resource/the-bridge-to-life/>.

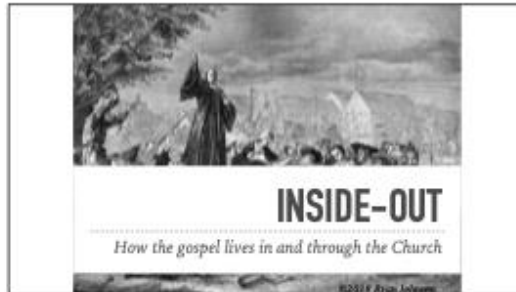
APPENDIX E
FOUR CIRCLES DIAGRAM¹



1. James Choung, *True Story: A Christianity Worth Believing in*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 198.

APPENDIX F

INSIDE-OUT CURRICULUM



RESPONSIBLE EVANGELISM

The loving proclamation and demonstration of the gospel to our neighbors because of Jesus' command, by the Spirit's power, and with the heart of the Father for the world with the urgency of eternity in mind.

(Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, & John 3:16; 11:25-26)

20.2.5.2. System Infection



Grace at the origin of romantic love, which is the entry point for the hopes of marriage, is related to the concept of intimacy... 'Intimacy is when I know somebody else as they really are. It is when I know someone inwardly and not just outwardly.

Christ was unimpressed. For example, in *human beings from the inside* in. He was only interested in people from the inside out. He pulled away from people who looked like "whitewashed tombs" but whose insides were filled with "the bones of the dead" (Matthew 23:27). Intimacy is the opposite of the whitewashed tomb. It is seeing into the core of a person while not being repelled by what you see.

-Paul Zahl, GRACE IN PRACTICE

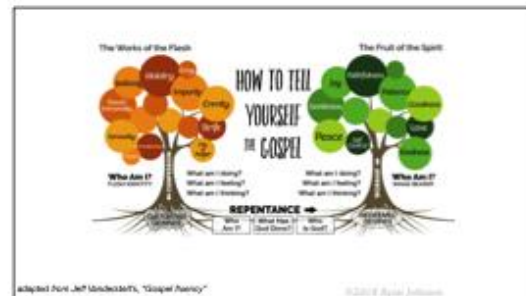
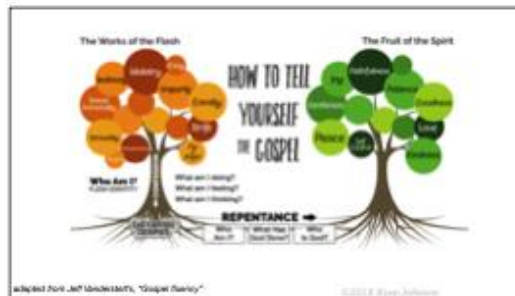
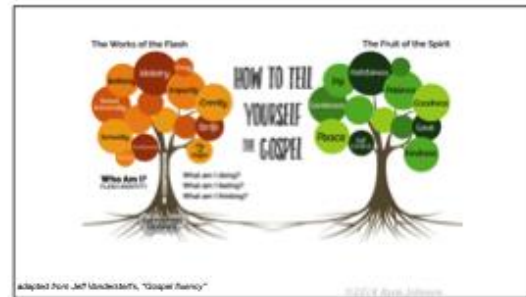


HOW TO TELL YOURSELF THE GOSPEL

➤ Galatians 5:16-26

✧ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the Spirit is against the desires of the flesh; they are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If you live by the Spirit, let each one of you keep such a hold on the Spirit, let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

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Journal of Internal Medicine 255: 103–110



PART II
CONTEXTUALIZATION

DEFINING WHERE WE ARE

ADAPTED FROM JEFF UNDERHILL'S, "GOSPEL JOURNEY"

PART I CONTEXTUALIZATION — DEFINING WHERE WE ARE

► **The Truth about Unbelievers** [2 Corinthians 4:4-6]

► **Spiritual Blindness**

► "In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

ADAPTED FROM JEFF UNDERHILL'S, "GOSPEL JOURNEY"

PART I CONTEXTUALIZATION — DEFINING WHERE WE ARE

► The Truth about Conversion | Mark 8:22-25

► Spiritual Sight

- "And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, 'Do you see anything?' And he looked up and said, 'I see people, but they look like trees walking.' Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly."

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CONTEXTUALIZING THE GOSPEL

► One Gospel, Many Faces

► Galatians 1:6-8

- "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel (but this is not really a different gospel) and that some have turned away from the one we preached to you, let him be accursed."

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CONTEXTUALIZING THE GOSPEL

► Galatians 2:7

- "On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised."
- **Discussion:** How can there be no other gospel, yet a gospel to the Jews, and a gospel to the Gentiles?

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CONTEXTUALIZING THE GOSPEL

- We must learn to gauge the individual and communal receptivity to the gospel and contextualize.
- What's the difference in the two? (the gospel to the Jew versus the gospel to the gentile)

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CONTEXTUALIZING THE GOSPEL

► Group Exercise

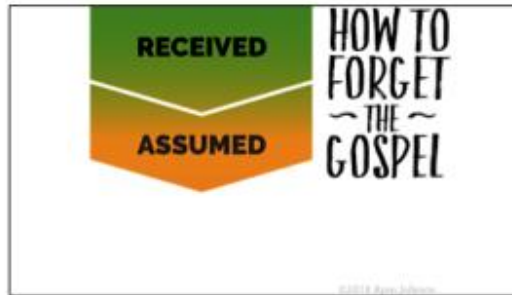
- Group 1: Look at the Acts 2:14-41 approach and take notes.
- Group 2: Look at the Acts 17:16-34 approach and take notes.
- How does this apply with where you are going? What are you assuming about your context?

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RECEIVED

HOW TO
FORGET
THE
GOSPEL

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“

If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather *teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.*

—Antoine de Saint-Exupery

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PART III

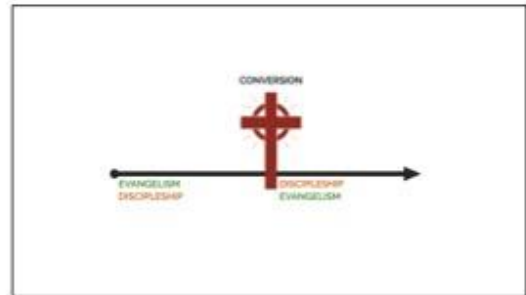
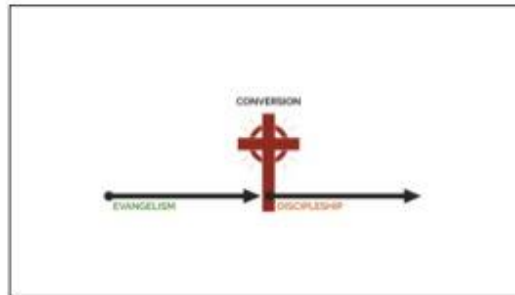
THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF EVANGELISM

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PART IV THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF EVANGELISM

There must be a marriage of the Micro and Macro Gospel.

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PART II THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF EVANGELISM

» **Macro Gospel:**

- » **Creation:** The way things are supposed to be. Renewal to life. (Genesis 1-2)
- » **Fall:** The way things are. (Genesis) This is a pre-condition of evangelism. The fall has touched all of life and is in need of redemption. (Genesis 3-5, Jeremiah 17, Romans 3:21-24)
- » **Redemption:** The way things can be. (i.e. evangelism). Effective evangelism as seen in Acts 17, John 9, John 4, John 5, among others, involves liberating us from the fall, has indicated a particular people and then speaking the gospel to the heart—a ministry of incarnation. (2 Corinthians 5:14) In Christ, God is reconciling the world to himself.
- » **Restoration:** The way things will be. We look forward to the complete redemption of our bodies, but until then we co-labor in Christ to see people formed again and move into his image each day. This is Discipleship. God is pleased to work through his people to redeem the world and everything in it. Renewal is ongoing. (Revelation 21:5, Romans 8:18-25)

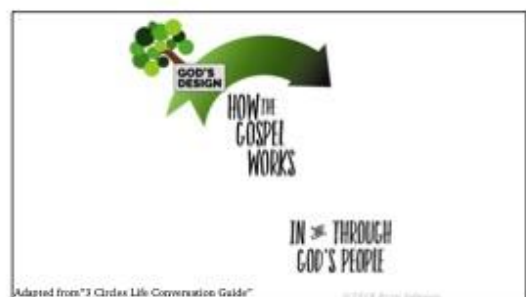
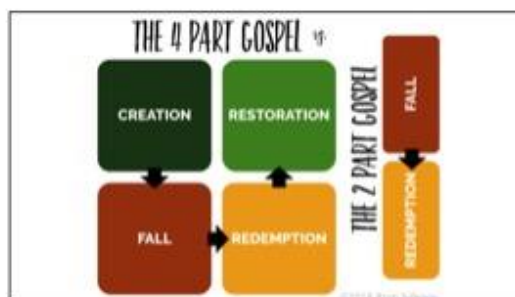
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PART II THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF EVANGELISM

» **Micro Gospel: Fall—Redemption**

- » **All have sinned:** Romans 3:23—"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."
- » **Sin = Death:** Romans 6:23—"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (90%)
- » **Everyone must Respond:** Philippians 2:11—"Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."
- » **Repentance and Belief are Necessary:** Acts 2:38-39—"And Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.'"

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DISCUSSION

- What is a truncated Gospel in your own words?
- How have we/you truncated the gospel?
- Where do we go from here?

PART IV

THE GOSPEL ON THE OUTSIDE

PART IV—THE GOSPEL ON THE OUTSIDE

1. In the Context of Community
2. With a Theology of Place
3. To the Person of Peace

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PART IV—THE GOSPEL ON THE OUTSIDE

1. In the context of community
 1. How often is evangelism strictly personal in the Bible?
 2. Principle: Think intentional, not additional.

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COLLECTIVE MISSION

Acts 2:42-47

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. (33-3)

Acts 5:42

And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 3:6

"So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us."


THE ROMAN MODEL

PRESENTATION (WORDS)
Present the Gospel message to people


THE CELTIC MODEL

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THE ROMAN MODEL

PRESENTATION (WORDS)
Present the Gospel message to people


THE CELTIC MODEL

INVITATION & BELIEF
Invite people to make a decision to believe and follow Christ.

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THE ROMAN MODEL

PRESENTATION (WORDS)
Present the Gospel message to people


THE CELTIC MODEL

INVITATION & BELIEF
Invite people to make a decision to believe and follow Christ.

FELLOWSHIP
If people decide positively, welcome them into church fellowship.

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 THE ROMAN MODEL	 THE CELTIC MODEL
PRESENTATION (WORDS) Present the Gospel message to people	FELLOWSHIP Establish community with people or bring them into your faith community
INVITATION & BELIEF Invite people to make a decision to believe and follow Christ	
FELLOWSHIP If people decide positively, welcome them into church fellowship	

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 THE ROMAN MODEL	 THE CELTIC MODEL
PRESENTATION (WORDS) Present the Gospel message to people	FELLOWSHIP Establish community with people or bring them into your faith community
INVITATION & BELIEF Invite people to make a decision to believe and follow Christ	PRESENTATION (WORDS & DEEDS) Within that fellowship, engage in conversation, ministry, prayer & worship
FELLOWSHIP If people decide positively, welcome them into church fellowship	

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 THE ROMAN MODEL	 THE CELTIC MODEL
PRESENTATION (WORDS) Present the Gospel message to people	FELLOWSHIP Establish community with people or bring them into your faith community
INVITATION & BELIEF Invite people to make a decision to believe and follow Christ	PRESENTATION (WORDS & DEEDS) Within that fellowship, engage in conversation, ministry, prayer & worship
FELLOWSHIP If people decide positively, welcome them into church fellowship	BELIEF & INVITATION Over time, if they realize they believe, invite them to make a commitment

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“

If I have only an hour with someone, I will spend the first minutes asking questions and finding out what is troubling their heart and mind, and then in the last 5 minutes I will share something of the truth.”

-Francis Schaeffer

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PART IV—THE GOSPEL ON THE OUTSIDE

1. In the Context of Community

1. Discussion: What could mission in the context of community look like for you this year?

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PART IV—THE GOSPEL ON THE OUTSIDE

1. In the Context of Community

2. With a Theology of Place

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PART IV—THE GOSPEL ON THE OUTSIDE

1. In the Context of Community
2. With a Theology of Place
 1. God's call has always been deeply rooted in place.
 2. The Macedonian Call | Acts 18:9-10
 3. What if you could be more confident in the place that God has called you to labor?

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PART IV—THE GOSPEL ON THE OUTSIDE

1. In the Context of Community
2. With a Theology of Place
 1. Jeremiah 28:4-7
 - > "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the nations whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare."
 2. Acts 17:26-27
 - > And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,

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PART IV—THE GOSPEL ON THE OUTSIDE

1. In the Context of Community
2. With a Theology of Place
 1. Discussion: How is God rooted you in place? What is one practical way that you could be more intentional about the places you frequent?

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PART IV—THE GOSPEL ON THE OUTSIDE

1. In the Context of Community
2. With a Theology of Place
3. To the Person of Peace

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PART IV—THE GOSPEL ON THE OUTSIDE

1. In the Context of Community
2. With a Theology of Place
3. To the Person of Peace
 1. How do I know who God is calling me to?
 2. Read Luke 10:1-11
 1. Discussion: How does Jesus tell us to evangelize about the Kingdom?

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PART IV—THE GOSPEL ON THE OUTSIDE

1. To People of Peace:
 1. Observations:
 1. How will we recognize people of peace?
 1. They will welcome you, serve you, and be receptive to your message.
 2. We're called to be ready among those He's called us to.
 1. No extra clothes, or money, or shoes.
 2. Stay in whatever house you are led to as long as they will possibly have you, and share your life with them. Eat whatever they serve you.
 3. Expect them to serve you and help you cover your costs because a laborer deserves his wages.
 4. Do not go house to house, instead, stay a long time and have the opportunity to disciple instead of just "dropping the gospel" and leaving.

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PART IV—THE GOSPEL ON THE OUTSIDE

1. In the Context of Community
2. With a Theology of Place
3. To the Person of Peace
 1. Discussion: Have you ever taken Jesus' approach to evangelism?
 - What encourages you about Jesus' approach?
 - How can you begin to implement this lifestyle today?

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PART V BECOMING RESPONSIBLE STEWARDS OF THE GOSPEL



TOOL BELT

- The key to any tool is making a bee-line for Jesus.
- ESV Gospel Reader's Edition
- Bridge Diagram
- Life on Mission: 3 circles app.
- Luke 15—"Where do you see yourself in this story?"
- Listening for the fall—speaking redemption.

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BECOMING RESPONSIBLE STEWARDS OF THE GOSPEL

WHAT WILL MAKE THIS STICK?

1. Prayer for yourself and for the lost within your sphere's of influence.
2. Accountability through discipling relationships. (Luke 10:17-20)

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PRAYER AIMS

- Acts 26:18 —(Paul before Herod Agrippa) To open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.
- John 6:44 —No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.
- Colossians 4:3—At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison
- Matthew 9:37-38 —Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

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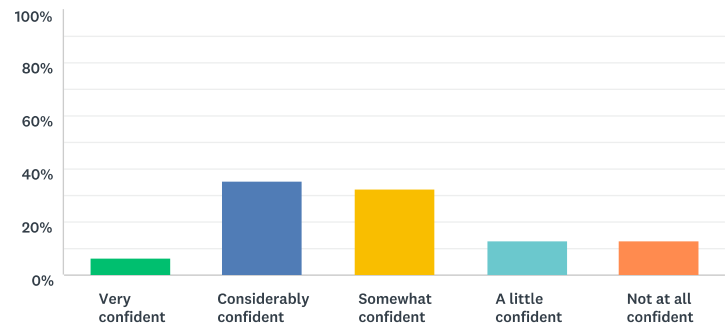
APPENDIX G
RESPONSIBLE EVANGELISM PRE-TEST RESULTS

Responsible Evangelism Pre-Test

SurveyMonkey

Q1 How confident are you in your ability to share the gospel with others?

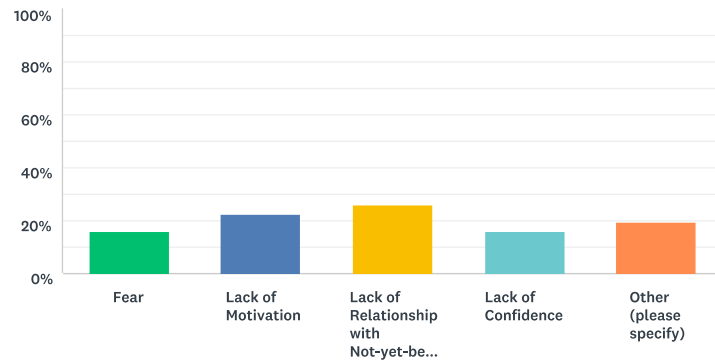
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ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Very confident		6.45%	2
Considerably confident		35.48%	11
Somewhat confident		32.26%	10
A little confident		12.90%	4
Not at all confident		12.90%	4
TOTAL			31

Q2 What is the greatest barrier you face right now in becoming a more effective witness?

Answered: 31 Skipped: 0

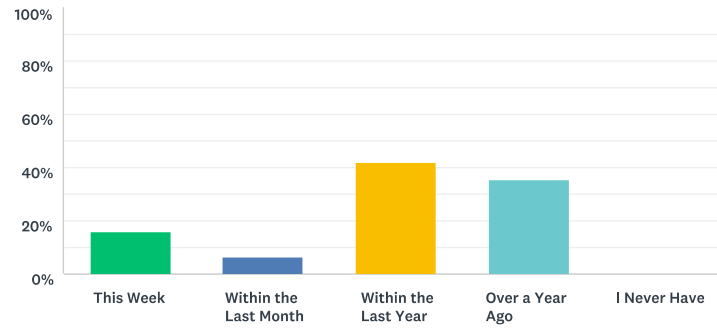


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Fear	16.13%	5
Lack of Motivation	22.58%	7
Lack of Relationship with Not-yet-believers	25.81%	8
Lack of Confidence	16.13%	5
Other (please specify)	19.35%	6
TOTAL		31

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	lack of love that compels to action	9/9/2018 8:30 AM
2	Not listening to the Holy Spirit	9/8/2018 7:51 PM
3	Being too focused on my citizenship in the world, and not enough on the Spirit.	9/7/2018 9:21 PM
4	Recognition of opportunities	9/7/2018 5:05 PM
5	No barrier	9/7/2018 1:34 PM
6	I desire to understand where they come from first and that takes time	9/7/2018 1:12 PM

Q3 When was the last time you recall sharing the gospel with someone outside of the Church?

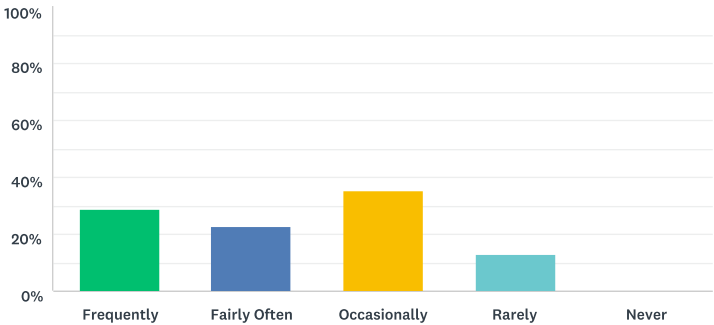
Answered: 31 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
This Week	16.13%	5
Within the Last Month	6.45%	2
Within the Last Year	41.94%	13
Over a Year Ago	35.48%	11
I Never Have	0.00%	0
TOTAL		31

Q4 How often do you pray for not-yet-believers?

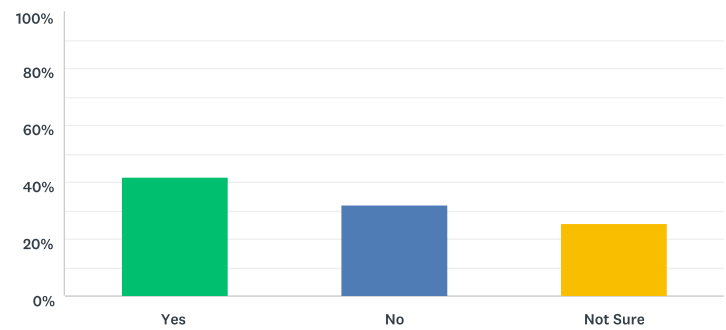
Answered: 31 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Frequently	29.03%	9
Fairly Often	22.58%	7
Occasionally	35.48%	11
Rarely	12.90%	4
Never	0.00%	0
TOTAL		31

Q5 Have you personally led someone to faith in Christ?

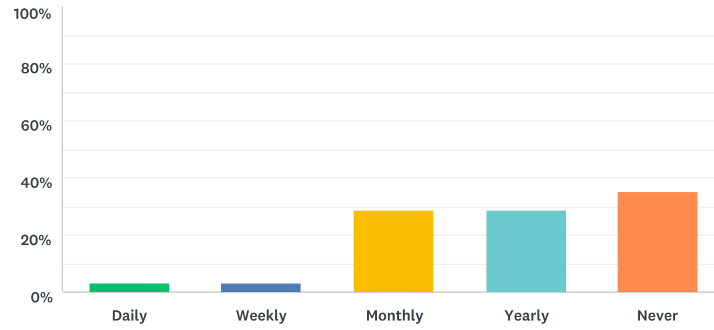
Answered: 31 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Yes		41.94%	13
No		32.26%	10
Not Sure		25.81%	8
TOTAL			31

Q6 How often do other Christians hold you accountable to be a responsible steward of the gospel through evangelism?

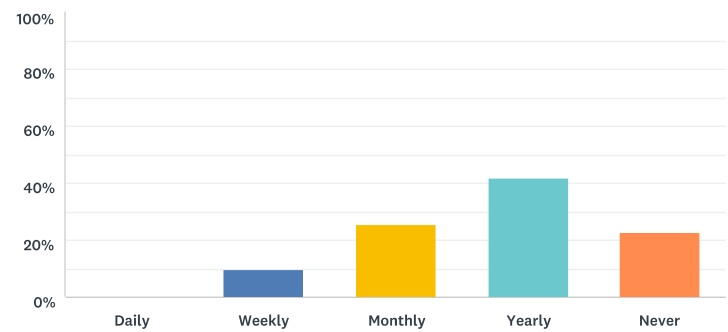
Answered: 31 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Daily	3.23%	1
Weekly	3.23%	1
Monthly	29.03%	9
Yearly	29.03%	9
Never	35.48%	11
TOTAL		31

Q7 How often do you pray for the salvation of people in other nations?

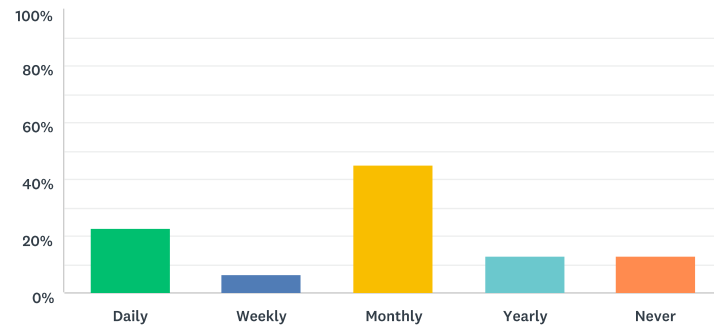
Answered: 31 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Daily		0.00%	0
Weekly		9.68%	3
Monthly		25.81%	8
Yearly		41.94%	13
Never		22.58%	7
TOTAL			31

Q8 How often do you spend intentional time with not-yet-believers?

Answered: 31 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Daily	22.58%	7
Weekly	6.45%	2
Monthly	45.16%	14
Yearly	12.90%	4
Never	12.90%	4
TOTAL		31

Q9 Would you describe evangelism as a joy or a burden? Explain.

Answered: 31 Skipped: 0

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	It's an "ought". But it is a command. It's an issue of obedience but should/could be an issue of the burdened heart.	9/9/2018 8:30 AM
2	As a joy -- but as something I'm not quite ready to take on.	9/9/2018 4:36 AM
3	Scary joy - it is sad when people are not receptive, and incredible feeling to point people to Jesus	9/8/2018 7:51 PM
4	Burden sometimes	9/8/2018 4:38 PM
5	Both ... I'm so stoked when I get the opportunity, but I feel so guilty when I let opportunities pass me by	9/8/2018 12:02 PM
6	A burden. Our world is so polarized that nonbelievers aren't just folks who aren't believers. They are aggressively against anything "conservative". If you are a follower of Christ you are labeled a racist womanizer.	9/8/2018 7:55 AM
7	Probably more like a guilt-laden chore at times, although I always get a strong feeling of joy once I step out.	9/8/2018 7:17 AM
8	joy when it's not forced	9/8/2018 5:59 AM
9	Both - Before the opportunity arises, it feels like a burden and a fear to overcome. When it happens, though, sharing the gospel is a joy not only because I am reminded of my own hope and trust in Christ, but also because I have hope that the person hearing would be touched by the Holy Spirit.	9/8/2018 12:45 AM
10	It's a joy to participate in the Gods redemptive work.	9/7/2018 10:47 PM
11	i used to think of it as a burden. I still think of it as a risk. I want to think of it as a joy.	9/7/2018 9:21 PM
12	It can at first glance appear to be a burden from fear of rejection or not fully being equipped to guide someone through the process. But it is pure joy sharing the Good News of our Lord.	9/7/2018 9:12 PM
13	It feels like a burden until you are in the act, and then it brings joy	9/7/2018 8:14 PM
14	For me, it seems more like a burden. I find it extremely difficult to talk to people, especially when I don't know what their reaction will be to what I am saying.	9/7/2018 7:58 PM
15	Joy but scary. Just not sure how to have steady relationship with non believers.	9/7/2018 7:47 PM
16	It's not a great burden, but at the same time it's not something that I aggressively pursue.	9/7/2018 7:15 PM
17	Burden... have a desire to do it and know God commands it but I don't know where to start. Often times feel inward pressure that I should be doing something.	9/7/2018 7:09 PM
18	A joy once you've done it. But it's scary when you're in the middle of it.	9/7/2018 6:31 PM
19	Burden. Not motivated	9/7/2018 6:06 PM
20	burden	9/7/2018 5:42 PM
21	Both	9/7/2018 5:05 PM
22	A burden... sometimes I think that others will do the job, but then, what if everyone thought that? Then no one would be proclaiming the gospel. I feel like evangelism is a joy in the context of living life with another person and being able to share the gospel with them in a natural way.	9/7/2018 3:53 PM
23	It's only a burden because I'd have to step outside of my normal/close friend circle	9/7/2018 3:20 PM
24	Joy when done only when the time is right in relationship	9/7/2018 3:02 PM
25	Joy to share, burden because it's difficult to have the relationships to share the gospel	9/7/2018 1:41 PM
26	Both	9/7/2018 1:39 PM

Responsible Evangelism Pre-Test

SurveyMonkey

27	Evangelism automatically flows from a heart of joy that comes from a life that has experienced the transforming light of God's love/grace. Evangelism is a life lived, not a thing to be done.	9/7/2018 1:34 PM
28	Scary, but not a burden.	9/7/2018 1:23 PM
29	A burden in that I've been praying for and trying to share with the same group of people for 20 years and there never seem to be any results or fruit	9/7/2018 1:19 PM
30	I feel like burden is the more honest answer. I feel the burden because I feel the conviction that I should be doing better in this area. Yet, those times when I am sharing the gospel with others are always a joy.	9/7/2018 1:14 PM
31	Both, a joy to be an ambassador of such a hopeful message and also a burden that only God can carry, yet a burden I feel. It is not as simple at times.	9/7/2018 1:12 PM

Q10 If you led someone to Jesus and they became a Christian, what would you do next to help them grow in faith?

Answered: 31 Skipped: 0

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Hang out together. Challenge them to begin praying for themselves to have a hungry heart for God and His word and for God to begin changing their desires. Then I would take them through the book of John, Ephesians, etc. Simultaneously get them around other believers in the body.	9/9/2018 8:30 AM
2	keep hanging out with them and talking about Jesus	9/9/2018 4:36 AM
3	Na	9/8/2018 7:51 PM
4	Connect them to a good local church and check up on them regularly	9/8/2018 4:38 PM
5	Get them in a church!!	9/8/2018 12:02 PM
6	Don't know. Engage with them regularly and walk with them.	9/8/2018 7:55 AM
7	Invite to church	9/8/2018 7:17 AM
8	start doing discipleship	9/8/2018 5:59 AM
9	Invite to church or MC, read through books/the Word together	9/8/2018 12:45 AM
10	I would encourage them to join a community small group so that they can be exposed to God's people. After that I would encourage this person to join a group that would help them in spiritual formation that would require greater commitment. Such as a discipleship group where they can go deeper.	9/7/2018 10:47 PM
11	teach them how to pray, go through Gospel Centered Life, bring them to MC and church	9/7/2018 9:21 PM
12	Pray with and for them. Check in with them, and study together.	9/7/2018 9:12 PM
13	Encourage them to join a discipleship group	9/7/2018 8:14 PM
14	Try to get them to come to church/join a d-group/find an MC	9/7/2018 7:58 PM
15	Get them connected in a church.	9/7/2018 7:47 PM
16	Spend time with them. Show them how to have time alone with God. Invite them to church.	9/7/2018 7:15 PM
17	Do a bible study together, do life together.	9/7/2018 7:09 PM
18	Ideally, I'd invite them to church, pray with them and for them, introduce them to some of my solid Christian friends, give them books to read :), suggest books of the Bible to start reading, and text/call frequently asking how they are doing.	9/7/2018 6:31 PM
19	Take them to church	9/7/2018 6:06 PM
20	I would hope I would make the time to disciple and spend intentional time with them.	9/7/2018 5:42 PM
21	Remain in relationship with them and encourage them to connect with other Christians (church); plus, look for opportunities to read scripture and pray with them.	9/7/2018 5:05 PM
22	If it was somebody I knew and would interact with often, I would hopefully hold them accountable and help them grow in their faith and get them involved in fellowship with other believers.	9/7/2018 3:53 PM
23	Keep spending intentional time with them and try to get them plugged in with a community	9/7/2018 3:20 PM
24	Meet regularly to discuss scripture and to pray together	9/7/2018 3:02 PM
25	Church, discipleship, MC, time with them in our home	9/7/2018 1:41 PM
26	Help them get into community of other believers/church. Mentor/disciple them if possible.	9/7/2018 1:39 PM
27	Walk beside them. Encourage, Shepherd them.	9/7/2018 1:34 PM
28	Get them into discipleship and connected with other believers.	9/7/2018 1:23 PM

Responsible Evangelism Pre-Test

SurveyMonkey

29	Continue to build relationship, pray with them and for them and try to find a way to lead them into a community and study of the Bible that they were comfortable with	9/7/2018 1:19 PM
30	Give them a copy of the Fireproof movie. Only Kirk Cameron can bring true transformation to a new believer. Seriously, I would suggest they join me in discipleship group, missional community, and/or I'd suggest we get together regularly to read the Word together.	9/7/2018 1:14 PM
31	Discipleship: life on life, do life together, get together in God's word, encourage one another, encourage them to dig deep into God's word and spiritual disciplines	9/7/2018 1:12 PM

APPENDIX H

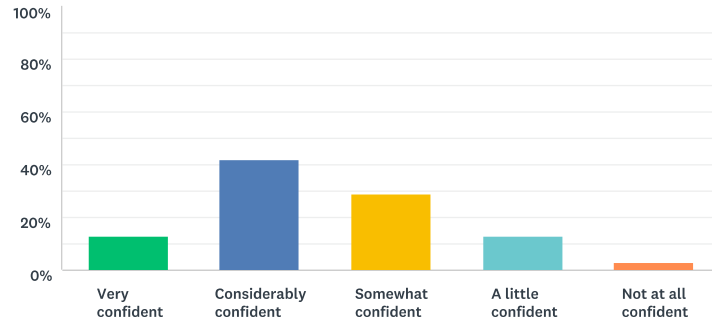
RESPONSIBLE EVANGELISM POST-TEST RESULTS

Responsible Evangelism Post Test

SurveyMonkey

Q1 How confident are you in your ability to share the gospel with others?

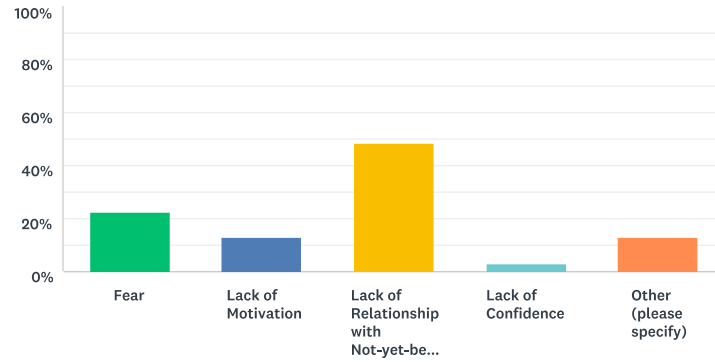
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very confident	12.90%	4
Considerably confident	41.94%	13
Somewhat confident	29.03%	9
A little confident	12.90%	4
Not at all confident	3.23%	1
TOTAL		31

Q2 What is the greatest barrier you face right now in becoming a more effective witness?

Answered: 31 Skipped: 0

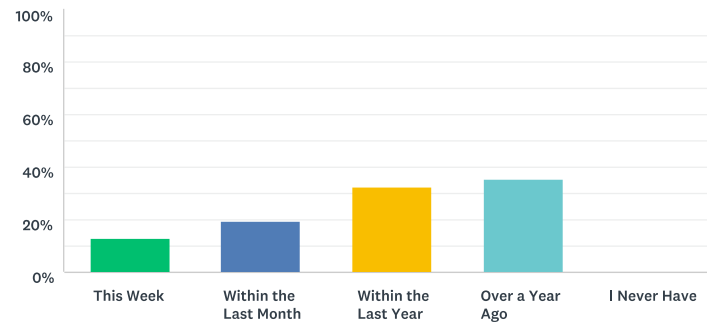


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Fear	22.58%	7
Lack of Motivation	12.90%	4
Lack of Relationship with Not-yet-believers	48.39%	15
Lack of Confidence	3.23%	1
Other (please specify)	12.90%	4
TOTAL		31

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Taking the time; crossing the business line into the personal side. Slowing down.	12/14/2018 9:30 AM
2	All of the above	12/11/2018 3:34 PM
3	Intentionality day to day as you do life seeing every opp as an opp to share His love	12/9/2018 9:00 AM
4	Forgetting priorities	12/9/2018 8:38 AM

Q3 When was the last time you recall sharing the gospel with someone outside of the Church?

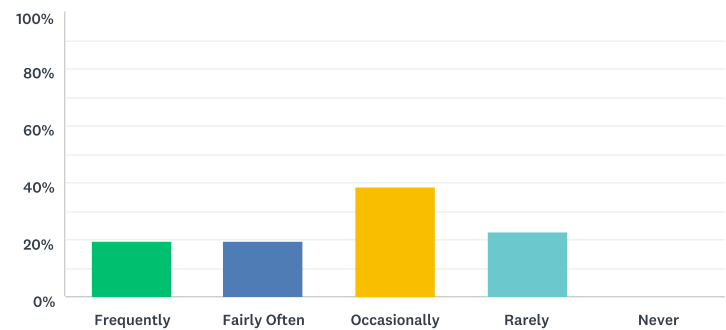
Answered: 31 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
This Week	12.90%	4
Within the Last Month	19.35%	6
Within the Last Year	32.26%	10
Over a Year Ago	35.48%	11
I Never Have	0.00%	0
TOTAL		31

Q4 How often do you pray for not-yet-believers?

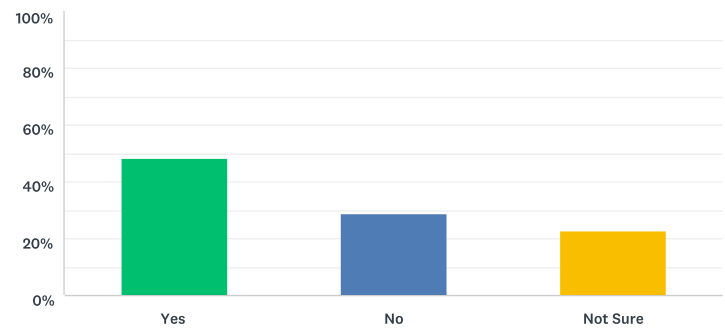
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ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Frequently		19.35%	6
Fairly Often		19.35%	6
Occasionally		38.71%	12
Rarely		22.58%	7
Never		0.00%	0
TOTAL			31

Q5 Have you personally led someone to faith in Christ?

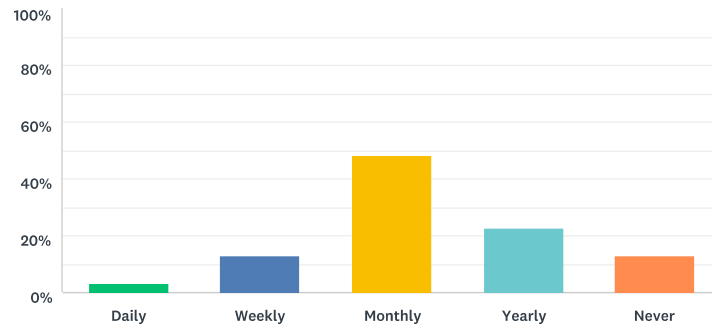
Answered: 31 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	48.39%	15
No	29.03%	9
Not Sure	22.58%	7
TOTAL		31

Q6 How often do other Christians hold you accountable to be a responsible steward of the gospel through evangelism?

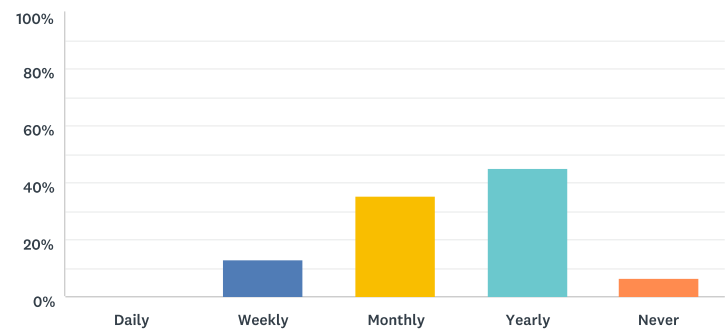
Answered: 31 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Daily	3.23%	1
Weekly	12.90%	4
Monthly	48.39%	15
Yearly	22.58%	7
Never	12.90%	4
TOTAL		31

Q7 How often do you pray for the salvation of people in other nations?

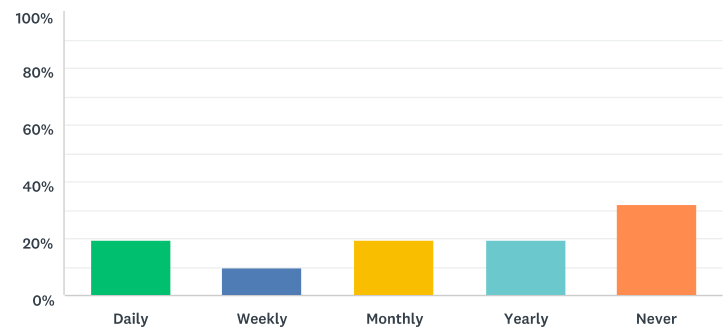
Answered: 31 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Daily		0.00%	0
Weekly		12.90%	4
Monthly		35.48%	11
Yearly		45.16%	14
Never		6.45%	2
TOTAL			31

Q8 How often do you spend intentional time with not-yet-believers?

Answered: 31 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Daily	19.35%	6
Weekly	9.68%	3
Monthly	19.35%	6
Yearly	19.35%	6
Never	32.26%	10
TOTAL		31

Q9 Would you describe evangelism as a joy or a burden? Explain.

Answered: 31 Skipped: 0

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	It's a joy to share a gift that we have received undeservedly.	12/14/2018 11:26 AM
2	To me, it has become a joy. My faith is most strengthened when I'm sharing it.	12/14/2018 9:51 AM
3	A burden because not sure I'll say the right things. Feel more comfortable sharing with children and do daily. Adults and older kids are much more of a burden due to worry about saying the wrong thing	12/14/2018 9:42 AM
4	Neither. Matter of obedience in the worst sense, therefore duty. But sometimes when the Holy Spirit gives a clear opening, it's a joy.	12/14/2018 9:30 AM
5	the idea of getting in a position where i can share it feels like a burden	12/14/2018 9:28 AM
6	Both. The fear aspect makes you not want to share your faith and can feel like a weight. You know you should but you don't and it becomes a burden. On the other hand, sharing your faith often times leads to joy but I think the fear overtakes the joy more often.	12/14/2018 9:25 AM
7	Joy. Makes your heart feel joyful in sharing the gospel knowing someone might be saved.	12/14/2018 6:05 AM
8	I think it's probably one of the best feelings when God gives you the opportunity to expose someone to the gospel and lead them to a saving relationship with Christ. My current situation is not having enough relationships with not-yet-believers.	12/13/2018 5:23 PM
9	A burden-- I feel like I need to do it more but am convicted that I do not.	12/13/2018 11:01 AM
10	I want to say it's a joy, but it feels like a burden as I fear rejection. I also am not inclined to talk much with anybody outside my circle of friends and acquaintances.	12/11/2018 6:26 PM
11	I know it should be a joy, but it's very hard for me, so it feels more like a burden.	12/11/2018 3:34 PM
12	Right now, a burden because it takes me out of my natural routine since I'm not friends with nonbelievers. But it's a responsibility I should take seriously	12/11/2018 12:17 PM
13	it's becoming more of a joy as I practice it more often.	12/11/2018 11:13 AM
14	joy	12/10/2018 3:28 PM
15	to be honest I'm not sure.	12/10/2018 11:20 AM
16	A joy.	12/10/2018 5:51 AM
17	Burden - because of the hardened hearts of adults.	12/9/2018 11:07 PM
18	Probably more as a burden because most people I have shared the Gospel with are not interested. I believe evangelism can be both joy and burden, but for me I would rather it just be - without judgment of myself, others, or God - without taking various evangelical conversations personally since God is after all the author and perfecter of every person's faith.	12/9/2018 11:04 PM
19	Joy	12/9/2018 9:06 PM
20	Burden. I'm lazy. Still, if I just see God working through me, it's not as hard. If I'm not too much of a perfectionist, I can see how I have lived a life that seeks to spread the Gospel.	12/9/2018 7:43 PM
21	Joy to see them grow and see Jesus, but a burden to have those relationships in the bubble of my life	12/9/2018 6:43 PM
22	Often a burden	12/9/2018 12:33 PM
23	Burden.	12/9/2018 10:11 AM
24	Burden - in the sense that it is a real responsibility, not an "extra" of the Christian faith. It is essential.	12/9/2018 9:34 AM
25	Burden due to fear and lack of motivation.	12/9/2018 9:21 AM

Responsible Evangelism Post Test

SurveyMonkey

26	It's a joy when I'm praying for not yet believers and for others in my discipleship. It's joyful in community. It can feel burdensome when I spiral into thoughts that I'm not doing enough.	12/9/2018 9:09 AM
27	Both, a joy to be a partner with God I. Sharing His message, Him sharing in and through me. If the Gospel it's not good news personally I can't share it to others. And a burden, a daily decision to trust Him, get out of the way and share. A burden in a way I need to give to Him but most times I put on self	12/9/2018 9:00 AM
28	Joyful when my heart is in tune with the vision of furthering the kingdom	12/9/2018 8:56 AM
29	Definitely more of a burden than a joy	12/9/2018 8:40 AM
30	A joy. It's along the lines of my spiritual gifting.	12/9/2018 8:38 AM
31	It is a joy to be able to develop relationships with people who are not yet believers. However, I need it to be more of a burden (in a positive sense) so I will be more intentional.	12/5/2018 9:27 PM

Q10 If you led someone to Jesus and they became a Christian, what would you do next to help them grow in faith?

Answered: 31 Skipped: 0

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	I would meet with them intentionally. I would try to listen well to what they are experiencing. I would seek ways to get them plugged into the church and to begin to develop their gifts.	12/14/2018 11:26 AM
2	I would teach them how to study the word and help them get plugged in to community somewhere.	12/14/2018 9:51 AM
3	Encourage them to be involved and check in with them about life is going.	12/14/2018 9:42 AM
4	Follow up with assurance salvation, get them into gospel of John, and in fellowship with other believers. Meet weekly.	12/14/2018 9:30 AM
5	Meet with them regularly to begin studying a gospel or essentials of faith study, answer questions, teach them how to pray.	12/14/2018 9:28 AM
6	I think 3 practical things I would do is bring them to community. I would probably go through a book of the Bible with them and just read God's word together. I would bring them to our missional community and let them experience community in that aspect and bring them to church on Sunday to be a part of the bigger calling.	12/14/2018 9:25 AM
7	Get them involved in church, Bible study, meet other believers - tell the pastor and ask for help from church.	12/14/2018 6:05 AM
8	I would educate them about the importance of being in community with other disciples in living out their new identity in Christ.	12/13/2018 5:23 PM
9	Help them get connected to a local church	12/13/2018 11:01 AM
10	Get the plugged into a church and group, and keep in touch with them.	12/11/2018 6:26 PM
11	Get them to come to church so other people more equipped to help them would be around.	12/11/2018 3:34 PM
12	Invite them to spend time with me and the church community, give them a book of the Bible to read, and maybe a bible study	12/11/2018 12:17 PM
13	keep being in the word, study a book, keep the lines of communication open, and encourage them to join a group of guys	12/11/2018 11:13 AM
14	disciple them	12/10/2018 3:28 PM
15	encourage them to read through the Gospel of John and get connected to a local church.	12/10/2018 11:20 AM
16	Encourage authentic bible study	12/10/2018 5:51 AM
17	Disciple/mentor them.	12/9/2018 11:07 PM
18	Talk to them. Listen, understand their doubts and questions. Continue to show love and care. Pray with them and help them develop a personal relationship with God. Warn them of pitfalls. Invite them to church/Mc/bible study. Encourage them to read the Bible and seek the truth for themselves.	12/9/2018 11:04 PM
19	Get them to attend church and try to get them into discipleship. Invite to social gatherings with other believers.	12/9/2018 9:06 PM
20	Stay friends with them. Keep meeting with them. Tell them they must commit to a local church.	12/9/2018 7:43 PM
21	Church, dgroup	12/9/2018 6:43 PM
22	Invite to church and discipleship.	12/9/2018 12:33 PM
23	N/A	12/9/2018 10:11 AM
24	Continue meeting with him/her regularly. Bring him/her into the body of the Church through MC or Sunday services.	12/9/2018 9:34 AM

Responsible Evangelism Post Test

SurveyMonkey

25	Bring them to church.	12/9/2018 9:21 AM
26	Connect them to community - an MC, a church gathering, a discipleship group, or a mentoring relationship with either myself or someone else.	12/9/2018 9:09 AM
27	Discipleship. Ways to consistently connect and get him in the word, a local church, serving and exposed to others following him. Community	12/9/2018 9:00 AM
28	Connect them with community to continue their development	12/9/2018 8:56 AM
29	Continue in relationship with them. Invite them to church or mc or just to study Bible together to help them continue to grow more in their faith	12/9/2018 8:40 AM
30	Invite them into the family/church to be fed, encouraged, discipled.	12/9/2018 8:38 AM
31	Invite them into community (if they weren't already), help them to connect to a church (if they aren't already), and find ways to keep the conversation going as a discipleship relationship.	12/5/2018 9:27 PM

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VITA

RYAN JOHNSON

PERSONAL

Born: June 17th, 1986, Frankfort, KY.

Married: Megan Johnson, October 27th, 2007

Children: Tatum, Caden, Roman, Maggie

EDUCATIONAL

Diploma, Anderson County High School, 2004.

B.S. Liberty University 2009.

M.A. Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011.

M.Div Metro Atlanta Seminary, 2014.

DMIN RESIDENCY

2016-2019

Expected Graduation, May 2019.

Ministerial

Intern, Grace Point Church, North Las Vegas, NV, 2007-2008.

Student Pastor, Stones Crossing Church Greenwood, IN, 2008-2012

Church Planting Resident, Perimeter Church, Johns Creek, GA, 2012-2014

Lead Pastor and Church Planter, New City Church, Lawrenceville, GA, 2014-Present